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MOULTRIE DE KALB.

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A ROMANCE

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OF

A COLLEGE REBELLION, AND ARMY AND MERCANTILE LIFE

ON THE

INDIAN BORDER.

BY THOMAS J. SPENCER, A. M.

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PREFACE.

THE SWORDS OF OUR SOLDIERS CARVED
THE FIRST PATHWAY THROUGH THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS AND UNITED,
UNDER ONE FLAG,
THE
ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC SLOPES.

Thos. J. Spencer.

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MOULTRIE DE KALB.

CHAPTER I.

TROUBLE—OMINOUS—IMPENDING.

In the branches—seemingly—of the honored, ancient elm in front of the spacious, student's boarding house, on University street, was an odd place for an owl to perch and hoot dismally.

And the musical after "Taps" notes of a whip-poorwill issuing from the open window of a second floor front, as if in response, was also strange. Yet to those not of the *Achates* clan of the Cedar Crest College secret societies, those unusual midnight sounds seemed to be the veritable utterances of the birds named.

In the big, rambling building, window after window was raised, some noisily, some noiselessly, and soft signal whistles issued from each. Then every sash was lowered, lights extinguished, and in a few minutes Fatty Forbush, waiting at the base of the big elm, was joined by a dozen fellow students, arrayed in grotesque and differing dominoes and disguises.

One, who was at once received as a person of authority, wore a woman's dress skirt, a shawl, sunbonnet, and a red and black pasteboard false face of an ass with a goat's beard.

A deep bass voice, and a formidable hickory club with a carved owl's head for a handle, might have proclaimed her a witch, or an amazon.

In obedience to a command, in Latin, from this person, three of the keenest eyed students took post. One went down, one up, and the third across the street, and stationed themselves, closely concealed under cover, as sentinels.

A low cat-call announced no eavesdroppers nor spies in windows nor on the street.

Then the "Committee of the Conclave," those under the big elm, conferred in low, confidential tones.

The old negress who passed, on the way from her sick mistress to the doctor, rushed on at first and then paused, half paralyzed.

Later on she said to the old physician :

"Fore de Lawd, doctor, I seed em! Dey is bugglars, tramps and furriners suah! Go koch em!"

But the good old doctor was a college trustee, suspected only students' pranks, and was too tired and sleepy to venture out and investigate.

"What did you hear them say?" he asked.

"I was so skeered I stopt a leetle fust, and I seed dey was in a ring roun' de big elm, shakin' hands all aroun'. An' de fat one he say—berry solemcholy like—he say 'Ebery one be a *Argus*, watch wid eyes front, rear, bof side and top ob his head! Watch Quantil like a hawk, and perteck *Apollo* Moultrie! Be sure nuf, an very sure each a ginuine *Briareus*, and pertect him with yer hundred arms!'

"And den he say : 'Make no mistake! Koch no one yer doant want! Be alert ; walk de wise path! de virgin saphead.'"

Fatty had said "walk in the wise path, *via sapientiæ*" (the way of wisdom).

So tense had been the attention of Dinah these words had burned themselves into her memory. For reasons, later on explained, the excited students

were calling the professors "Asses" and "traitors"—and worse.

These denunciations were hot-headed, unthinking and—well, it was all a mistake, of course; a most lamentable mistake, for which each and every "classic" and "scientific," plodding his way through the curriculum of dear old Cedar-Crest, deeply deplored, later on, as subsequent disclosures will amply testify.

Nevertheless they continued to be uttered—the denunciations—and were multiplied, and grew deeper, more open and defiant and louder.

"Detur Digniori" (Let it be given the more worthy), the cherished school motto, was no longer proudly quoted.

And some unknown recalcitrant, or some secret society committee or appointee, through malice or mischief, had turned inward to the wall the famous college banner, hung conspicuously over the chapel pulpit, upon which was emblazoned that motto, in letters of gold upon a field of celestial blue spangled with crystal stars.

The deplorable immediate, and ultimate beneficial results that fructified from all this are described further on.

Professor Cheval was thirty-five years old, just six feet tall and, although slender, muscular. His long limbs and arms would not suggest that fact save to a close, expert observer. He was, daily, at the college gymnasium, enthusing the students and, seemingly, enlisting his whole heart into the feats and exercises, but, really, doing more than anyone else in regulating and moderating the, ofttimes, too violent exertions of super-ambitious boys for athletic fame.

He was closely observant of everything, while, to the casual looker-on he was, in semblance, indifferent and, merely "a boy himself again," heartily enjoying and applauding the sports and contests, the skill and endurance and conquests he witnessed. Plain in attire, though with tailor-cut and well-fitting

clothes, there was an indefinable something about him, that made you turn, and look a second time, whenever he passed you by.

His eyes were deep set, and somewhat close together. But this would escape you during his tranquil moods, for when excited, their near juxtaposition seemed to emphasize that concentrated gaze, that never dropped nor wavered until it had subdued all opposition.

His hair was somewhat long, not of the frontier cowboy, nor the Mississippi planter length, however, and his Napoleonic moustache and long, gracefully tapering beard, lent him a military appearance which was dissipated, however, whenever, in his magnetic manner, he pointed an admonition with a "pat" proverb or an "*ungrammatic*" with—what our learned British cousins call—"a beastly Latin solecism."

At such times he revealed himself as a "man of letters," and a scholar, as much born to rule in his own realm, as military proficients in generalship are in theirs.

His heart and soul and every endeavor was enlisted in the problem, "how to perfect a sound mind in a sound body." And to evolve the solution was the paramount ambition of his life.

While he encouraged physical prowess, he couched his praise thereof in phrases that incited to love for scholastic eminence, prompted to more studious habits in study hours, and larger general, intellectual effort.

He especially believed *more in education than he did in instruction.*

His face was remarkably mobile. Swift as a flash it would change, with kaleidoscopic vividness, from a courtly to a ludicrous, comical, angry or sneering, or even a bland, vacant or inquiring expression. He was a "natural born" actor and elocutionist, and he was professor of elocution at Cedar-Crest College. When a boy his health was under-

mined by hard study. His family physician, a kind-hearted, brusque graduate of the war in his profession, and who loved him dearly, had thoroughly diagnosed his case and, in loud-mouthed, peremptory, practical directions, had commanded him to close his books, pack up and get ready to rough it on the plains, with an overland ox-train.

No wonder young Cheval was dismayed at this order. It was a change, indeed, from his quiet, student life, amid the luxuries of a cosy, well appointed home, to that of a "Bull-whacker" or, at least, to that in which his immediate associates would be Bull-whackers. To leave, for an indefinite period, his loved authors, his chosen volumes in his father's ample library, the historic pictures and classical statuary and busts, the antique vases and urns and his beloved mother, with her motley but choice array of bric-à-brac and old china, to become the everyday companion of bellowing bulls, huge freight wagons, and boisterous, profane teamsters seemed too awful for anything. However, go he must.

He had implicit faith in his kind but gruff old physician and implicitly he would obey him. So his little medicine chest was prepared, all other necessities provided, and he started, sleeping, on his tour, for weeks on the ground, in the open air, through all kinds of clement and inclement weather, sometimes with the shelter of a tent and, much of the time without any shelter whatever, exposed, now to heat, dust and blistering sunshine, and anon to rain, mud and bitter cold. And all this, instead of killing him, proved the salvation of his health.

Buffalo, at this period, peopled the, seemingly, boundless plains, immense seas of shoreless grass, in countless herds, east of the "Rockies." They were at once, food, shelter, raiment and illuminating material for the nomadic Indians, whose home was always on their trail.

Freight, not sent by sea all the way around Cape Horn on vessels and steamships, reached the Pacific

slope, the famed land of gigantic trees, gold-veined earth and luscious, brobdignagian-sized fruit, by transit in huge "bull trains," that stretched for miles, in long, thread-like lines, en route to their destination.

These ponderous wagons loomed up like immense wheeled arks on the treeless expanse of grass, and were styled "Prairie Schooners." Each had a capacity of several tons and, when loaded, required from twenty to forty yoke of oxen to draw it.

A trip across the continent, in those days, took weeks by the fastest stage transportation, and months by means of these wagon trains.

On going into camp the wagons were usually corralled, the enclosure being spheroid shaped for protection against Indians. And inside the enclosure thus formed, the teamsters and other trainmen usually bivouacked.

Herders, in reliefs, were told off, much like military guards are mounted, and the cattle, under their charge, were turned loose on the grass to graze.

This was the kind of life led by Cheval for six months. And from it he returned home, bronzed, brawny, and cured of his pulmonary and bronchial disorder.

* * * * *

Professor Cheval was closeted with Rev. Dr. Waring, the President of Cedar-Crest College. They were discussing charges lodged by Si Quantrell against certain, so-called, riotous students. Quantrell headed a delegation of his henchmen from among the citizens of Cedar-Crest. Moultrie De Kalb, a student, was cited as the principal offender. There had long existed a feud between Moultrie's father and Quantrell, and the latter had mustered his present following, hoping, by such formidable showing, to compel an investigation by the college authorities and the dismissal of Moultrie. Securing

that result he proposed thereafter to have the young man indicted as a criminal.

The culprit was guilty, not of malicious trespass, which was the charge made by Quantrell, but of leadership in a practical joke that had involved considerable damage to property in the village. Unfortunately, he had incurred the hearty dislike of the Professor of Classics—a florid, stoutish man of full habit, irritable, exacting and choleric.

His dislike, however, for young Moultrie, was not openly manifest, but slumbered like a smouldering fire, ready to break forth into a fierce blaze on the appearance of the first provocative breeze, for Moultrie, knowing the general unpopularity of the professor with the students, was the only one among them who, without any real malice, had the audacity to go too far in caricaturing him.

And yet the professor was really a truly good man, and amiable enough when not unduly provoked. He was extremely sensitive to ridicule, morbidly so. And although generally ready to forgive an open, unjust attack, he never would condone a sally of wit that exposed him to laughter. And the ill-guarded, unthinking, incisive and transparent assaults by Moultrie, in that line, he well knew of. Hence his implacable hostility toward him. Moultrie, not having confined his tongue, was liable to have his tongue confine himself.

To make matters worse, Moultrie was totally ignorant of this hostility, while, on the other hand, he enjoyed vastly the laughter and numerous comments, inside the college halls and in town, elicited by his ridiculous sallies in the class-room, and, of late, had grown worse than ever.

Utterly overlooking the increased critical manner and now illy-suppressed rage of the professor, waiting to pounce savagely on him as soon as, in his judgment, he could make the offense of sufficient gravity to demand, before the Faculty, his expulsion.

Only the Tuesday before, Moultrie had greatly exasperated him.

They were parsing a Latin sentence and the adjective "felix" fell to the young culprit.

"Felix is a noun," he hurriedly said, "proper, because the name of a person, masculine gender, singular number, and——"

"Come, come, come!" broke in the professor angrily, doubly incensed at detecting a mischievous wink from Moultrie to another merry-visaged classmate.

Quick as thought the young man responded. '*Cum*' is a verb, sir, but I don't see it! "Please have the sentence read, I have lost it and cannot give the connection."

The scene that followed, first the giggle and then the roar of the class, the exasperation of the professor and the pretended mystification of the offender —in the set phrase of all portrayers of indescribable things, "can be better imagined than described."

"I cannot believe anyone else sees it!" exclaimed the professor, hotly. "The English *come* is not the Latin *cum!* You have made a mistake, sir!"

"Excuse me; so I have. As big a mistake as that mantel manufacturer made about your heating apparatus."

"How's that, sir? What has that to do with your stupid error?"

"Why *he* made a *grate* mistake and I also made a *great* one."

Amid a roar of laughter the professor shouted,

"Class is dismissed!"

Of course a report of the occurrence, magnified and distorted, spread, like wild-fire, thoughout the college halls and from there to the town. And several persons, some only mischievously inclined, and others malevolently, because they hated the professor, simply because he was a learned *gentleman*, concocted further annoyance for him.

From behind fences, and from unseen crannies

and from other vantage points, while homeward bound, he was yelled at: "Hello, *Felix!*" Hi thar, come, come, come! All uttered in his own peculiar, sing-song tone.

Some of the more brazen and cowardly—principally of the alley-bred breed, who despised "*college men an' larnin*," openly reiterated these covert insults, directly to his face. And he could not, as openly, resent, save at the risk of jeers from his tormentors—so far beneath him socially—nor could he risk it out of self-respect.

It was insulting, unbearable. And he felt it, and showed he felt it. Had Schuyler Cheval been in his shoes he would have sailed serenely through the whole business, indifferent to or heartily enjoying it. And thus would have made their vulgar shafts harmless or "turned the laugh on the teasing rabble."

Happily, at this juncture, a tall, stalwart man, clad in Catholic clericals, grasped the nervous, bewildered professor by the hand. His smile and greeting were charming, enthusing, assuring, strengthening.

He had at once the face, mien and stature of a Leo and the manner of a lamb. He bore the air of a man born to win, either by command, persuasion or supplication, yet born to win. And benevolence beamed from every feature of his face and pose.

The professor and he had been boyhood playmates. And each, in his own drift, had watched and loved and respected the other.

The priest had carried a musket during the war, from 1861 to 1865, and afterward studied for and accepted orders.

"Let us walk together, I am going to the post-office," he said to the professor.

And arm in arm they proceeded in that direction.

There was no more jeering at the little professor after that. Whether it ceased through respect for the tall, commanding, soldierly looking-priest, or for what cause, did not clearly appear, but it ceased.

Both men were ordained clergymen, for the professor was a Methodist preacher.

And this opportune meeting cemented forever the old, boyhood friendship that had found birth years agone. And many happy hours ensued during which, in the cosy little library of the professor, the two mildly reveled in early reminiscences and discussions of Sanscrit, Greek and Latin literature. And shortly after this, both professor and priest took up their own respective lines of life and disappeared abruptly from the scenes and drift of our story.

But none who witnessed it will ever forget that abiding friendship of the "Papist" and "Protestant."

On the Thursday appointed Moultrie entered the class-room, sedately. Under his arm was his *Viri Romæ* and a formidable roll of foolscap.

This "roll" was his "original Latin composition in ten lines" the professor had ordered.

So much paper for so small an affair seemed ominous. And every student present knew there was some sort of further fun in store. But all remained orderly though nervously expectant.

Hurrying through the recitation the professor called, "Mr. De Kalb, your exercise now, please."

Moultrie rose, solemnly, and deliberately opened his "roll." Than he brushed up his forelock to resemble the professor's, cleared his throat in the manner of that gentlemen, and commenced reading, in imitation of the professor's intoning manner, but purposely mispronounced words frequently, thereby causing delays until, by the time six pages had been read, the recitation hour had nearly expired.

The professor then, apparently for the first time, discovered the mass of supposed manuscript, and exclaimed with some acerbity:

"If the remainder of your exercise, sir, is no better than what we have heard, it is just as well we have no more time to waste on it; you can leave it with me for examination."

Now this was just what Moultrie did not want to

do. But he had overleaped himself and was in for it. He placed the manuscript on the professor's desk, and that gentleman, to his amazement, discovering that only one line was written on each page, directed him to remain after the class was dismissed.

That very night Moultrie was a prime mover in a charivari to a newly married post-graduate, in which an old cannon, fired in a narrow street, shattered all the window-glass in the vicinity.

When I say he was the prime mover, I mean that he was a leading instigator, but, in justice, it must be said he protested loudly against resort to the artillery, when tin-pans, trumpets, cow-bells, shrill whistles, and other noisy things, had failed the serenaders in their object, and advised retreat.

He had been identified, however, and, although Si Quantrell had pierced several other disguises, Moultrie's was the only case he cared to work up at that stage.

The president of the college was an elderly gentleman, with strong prejudices, and an irascible temper, which he had brought under admirable subjection by the exercise of a strong will.

Few men in fact have ever attained that excellent control of themselves he had reached.

He had been assailed, for years, by vicious opponents, and of late had been more hounded than ever, by which I mean that, for four decades of struggle to elevate the human race to a higher plane, social, moral and intellectual, he had been opposed, misjudged and thwarted on all sides, latterly more so than in previous years.

And now he was harassed with a multiplicity of anxieties.

Antagonisms among the faculty, differences between the students and towns-people, the college debt, and various complications that threatened to kill the favorable prospect for an expected endowment, together with recent family affliction and

straitened financial circumstances of his own; all these combined to worry the noble old man, whose conscientiousness and innate kindly impulses, brought him only that sympathy which is an empty mockery, because it pities without relieving.

If some millionaire, whose shekels had piled up on his hands, in spite of the numerous princely benevolences he had bestowed, had stepped in and laid down a small hillock of plethoric gold-bags for the college, or had donated a quire or two of government bonds, much of the load might have been lifted from the oppressed heart of the dear old gentleman, leaving only the worry and grief of a personal nature to afflict him, and which nothing could have entirely assuaged.

But the last *good* "Magi" seemed dead, and benevolent millionaires "passed by on the other side."

How to thwart this very manifest malice of Quantrell, aimed at Moultrie, and yet do his duty, was what, on this Saturday morning, grievously perplexed him, and, relying much on the excellent common sense of Professor Cheval, he had called him in for confidential consultation, before taking any official action in the case.

There is always more or less jealousy and antagonism between towns-people and collegians in all college towns, and very serious differences were at fever heat in Cedar-Crest at this particular time. Differences fomented, largely, by Quantrell.

Of all the college faculty it was generally conceded Professor Cheval had the most friends and admirers among the villagers.

His quiet jokes, his unassuming dignity, and his open detestation of all phases of sham had made him very popular, in spite of his indifference to popularity.

The President of the college believed Cheval more valuable, in an effort to patch up a peace, than the entire balance of the corps of teachers, combined,

himself included. But now, when he was flattering himself that that was about to be accomplished, this lamentable, disgraceful and destructive charivari had come to overwhelm him.

Moultrie was, of all the students, his chosen favorite. And Cheval's also.

Because both knew there was no real malice in the boy.

"It is very unfortunate, very, all this affair," said the President. "It has served to widen the already lamentable breach and will, I fear, greatly complicate matters. It depresses me more than I can tell." Then, realizing his own utter impecuniosity he added, vehemently,

"I would have given a hundred dollars, poor as I am, and heavily in debt, if it had not happened! Oh, if I could only have prevented it! Dear me; dear me; it is too bad, *too bad!*"

"What had Quantrell to say?" asked Cheval, eying the President closely, for an instant, then judicially.

"Oh, well, he is after Moultrie, I can see *that!* To disgrace him is all he cares for, now, at least. I am afraid it will not end with our conclusion so far as Moultrie is concerned. We must save him! What *can* we do?"

Looking at Cheval as if asking "What?"

Neither spoke again for a full minute.

"Some terrible retribution will surely overtake Quantrell!" Cheval finally remarked.

He had seated himself and held a book open on his lap. He did not know it was upside down.

When he said "that man" or "that woman," however carelessly, he always expressed the contempt in which he held the party spoken of.

The words were a true barometer of his feelings toward the person referred to.

"I always think of a boy's mother," replied the president, "when an affair like this comes to pass.

Women feel disgrace so keenly, and moreover, Mrs. De Kalb dotes on Moultrie."

"I know Quantrell intends to use the investigation of the faculty as a stepping stone to criminal action before the courts," said Cheval.

"I shall insist therefore that our proceedings be with closed doors.

"Unusual as it may seem we have a precedent, and I, for one, do not propose to give that man a chance to make capital, for his personal malice, off our deliberations, at the sacrifice of *any one*, much less Moultrie."

The use of the Christian name, by the professor, in speaking to, or of persons, was always indicative of a more than ordinary personal regard for such person or persons.

Here again were his words a true index of his feelings.

"Injudicious publicity and condemnation of offenses committed in thoughtlessness—especially in the case of young people—often leads to seriously bad results," remarked the president.

"I have known of punishment of that sort producing effects directly the opposite of what was sought; especially in the case of young persons. People can be inured to shame as well as any species of hardship, for shame is hardship, and for that reason, in all cases of mischief resulting from mere exuberance of animal spirits, I certainly do not approve of harsh public correction.

"When the offense is the outgrowth of a malicious disposition that needs prompt curbing—or absolute eradication—if that is possible, the case is entirely different.

"I tell you, however, that *unreasonable* correction has done more to deprave the human race than anything else; unwise restrictions in youth possibly excepted. Suppose we should resolve on a public investigation Damaging facts would surely come to light, facts not at all criminal, but which, in the

present state of feeling, a jury of towns-people would most likely construe as such."

"Moultrie would be indicted and sent to prison. Of course he would be cruelly humiliated, but would it benefit him or any one?

"The usual cant about 'The majesty of the law must be vindicated,' and all that sort of stuff, in the matter of criminal procedure, to punish the wild colt pranks of a young student overflowing with animal exuberance, is the sheerest nonsense.

"As to the damages wrought at the charivari, I received this morning an anonymous note, asking that a member of the faculty ascertain accurately the same, in full, and announce it, in detail, in the chapel, whereupon, the writer assures me, cash to cover the same will be placed in my hands. The writer further disclaims any intention by the participants, in the outset, to do more than treat a former student to a lively, 'Chinese serenade.'

"Now Cheval," continued the president, "if there had been any of that malicious spirit dominating, that Mr. Quantrell charges, this note would never have been sent me. The handwriting is either most skillfully disguised or some outsider wrote it. It does not resemble the script of any student now on the college rolls. Read it and see if you can fix who is the author."

Cheval took the note, scrutinized it closely, for some little time, and then laughed immoderately.

The president joined him, out of sympathy, perhaps, because, otherwise, he could not have told "for the life of him" *why* he laughed, also.

"Wha—wha—what do you discover?" he asked.

"Why the manuscript is, apparently, understand me—*apparently*—masculine for a certainty. See how bold and defiant and, forgive the coinage—how 'honesty-assertive' it looks; but, to my mind, it is undoubtedly of purely feminine construction. Some sweet girl ally wrote it."

After some further discussion of the incidents of

the charivari Cheval withdrew and walked rapidly to his rooms in Druid Hall.

He was painfully aware of the state of feeling existing among the students, faculty, trustees and villagers. And he also read in the excited faces or averted looks of many of the young men that something unusual was brewing.

He scented mischief hatching of no ordinary character or proportions, and thought he saw encouragement, if not actual participation in it, foreshadowed in the demeanor of the graduating class.

And he set himself resolutely to work to find out what it could be.

On arrival at his rooms he found several students awaiting him. He greeted them cordially and then, in a shrewd but off-hand, seemingly careless, indifferent manner, proceeded to glean such inkling as he could.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREEK-LETTER CLANS ON THE WARPATH.

To quietly unearth and export from Cedar-Crest, and forever embargo therefrom the prime and most potent factors in the cause and continuance of these frictions and outbursts, was Cheval's secret determination.

And he neither had nor would admit any ally nor confidant.

And there is little doubt that if "*such a consummation so devoutly desired*" could be achieved, he was the only man to accomplish it.

On this particular Saturday morning, he arrived most unexpectedly at the nature and value of the principal unknown quantity of his self-imposed problem.

And he resolved to pursue it to the finish.

It would have bothered a much shrewder body of men than the faculty of Cedar-Crest College, at that time, to hide from the ken of the secret societies of that temple of learning any move, portending, impending, or actually resolved on against one of its members.

Cheval had been correct in his hypothesis when he suggested to Dr. Waring—the college president, that the masculine handwriting of the anonymous note the doctor had received was of feminine construction, no matter who was the builder of the phraseology. And the secret societies *did* have allies at the "Young Ladies' Seminary."

At this particular period in their history, those societies boasted an astonishing array of budding and embryonic talent. Among their numbers, were a future Cabinet officer, two coming U. S. and three State Senators, five members of the lower House of Congress, a Territorial delegate, two Governors, and an *honest* Indian agent. Half a dozen front-rank journalists and numerous successful lawyers, divines and capitalists. To his amazement, Professor Cheval found that his guests knew all about the singling out of Moultrie De Kalb for prosecution by Quantrell. He had believed it a profound secret between himself, that worthy, and his immediate confederates and the college president.

The president had, in fact, enjoined Quantrell not to divulge the lodging of his complaint against the young man to any one. [His real motive was to prevent worry by Moultrie's mother, who had a morbid sensitiveness that magnified everything that threatened ill.] "If he hears of it he may take fright and go away, and, of course, you understand, that would end all proceedings in his case, for we would have no power to recall him," the president had said. And such a move would have robbed Quantrell of his anticipated "sweet morsel"—revenge—also.

"Oh no! Not for worlds would I say anything!" he had replied.

And he had not said anything, except to his orphan daughter.

Now, there was a Young Ladies' Seminary in Cedar-Crest, situated at the extreme further end of the town from the college, and, what the collegians called the "Giddy-iddy," "harem-scarem" element among the girls there, were all members honorary of one or another of the college secret societies.

Some of them were looked upon, by the students, as spies, and were never given any serious confidences, however much they may have thought they were. But they entered their citadel, so to speak,—the citadel of the secret societies—all unconsciously with eyes blind-folded, through a covered way, and departed in the same manner, never seeing the lay of a salient, never learning the strength of a redan or flank defense, never discovering an abatis and never learning a "single speck" about the staked pitfalls and superficially buried environment of terrible torpedoes, and the great, big guns, loaded to the muzzle with grape and canister, that constituted their invulnerable fortress.

No indeed! the boys never "gave away" their strong points to these "suspects." These pert damsels were not smart enough for those smart students.

In other words, the little would-be, or suspected would-be, traitresses, never imagined the shrewdness of the brainy youths, who knew them thoroughly, but never told what they knew, nor told what they intended to do, but wormed out of them—dear sweet girls—as expertly as a veteran gunner worms a danger cartridge or shell out of a carelessly loaded cannon—everything they knew that was or threatened to be a danger or menace to any of their number.

But nevertheless, there *were some true* loyalists to

the secret societies among these same honorary members, who "stuck to the boys like a brother" "for better or for worse," as a wife should to a husband, but which some wives do not.

And Mattie Amelia Quantrell was one of these. She "hated" Moultrie—she said—and thought he was "altogether too thick" with that Southern girl —Bertha Poinsett, who was "much too much stuck up."

But she did dote on "Fatty" Forbush, with his rotund body and bullet-shaped head and jolly disposition and devilment.

And to him she forthwith went and, as Fatty himself expressed it,

"Clean gave the old boss away."

Cheval's callers had been purposely picked out, after considerable weighings of pro's and con's on his part.

They were not leaders among the students, not originators in any sense, but more valuable for the professor's purposes than brighter fellows would have been.

It is doubtful if he would have succeeded in what he sought if any one of them had, in any contingency, been compelled to assume the functions of leadership of one of the secret cabals plotting any frolic or big piece of mischief, in defiance of the faculty.

"He is not built that way."

Cheval had said disappointedly of one of them, later on, to whom he had entrusted certain work that required the exercise of discretion.

But in minor executive capacities, under able direction, for the full and faithful discharge of the schemes and plans of brilliant leadership, these boys were just the metal with the true ring that Cheval wanted.

He realized how valuable to good order and the best interests of the college would be their secession from the secret societies.

Matters were just then going so badly that, sometimes, he half believed there must be some outside, organized and well-concerted hostility by skillful and unseen enemies of the school, that pulled the strings that instigated and fostered the mischief-making then rampant among the students, making of these students mere puppets, but fixing on them all responsibility for their covert acts, so that they dare not recede nor betray their hidden accomplices.

Cheval's discerning eye had noted that these youths he had called to his study, could be led, and he had called them there as part of his deep-thought scheme to divert them from their seriously mischievous, and disaster-fraught tendencies into better paths. Profitable paths.

Without their being aware of the fact, he very adroitly gleaned from them all they knew of mischief past and mischief brewing.

"I'm afraid it will go hard with Moultrie," he said.

"We—I should say the societies, will make it hot, however, for anyone that harms him!" spoke a bold little fellow with peachy cheeks and brown eyes and beautiful features.

Cheval merely raised his eyebrows an instant and smiled.

"Old Quantrell better look out!" exclaimed a sixteen year old little sorrel-top—one of the bosses at the gymnasium—he was styled.

He was quite an acrobat, attended all the circuses, side-shows included—that came to town, and, in his geometry, always called a transit a transom.

"We've made a diagnosis and cooked up a dose for just such a case, and we've got all the details down fine, to surgery, if necessary," said a very decided, but quiet-faced, slender fellow with keen small, blue eyes, and thin, closely compressed lips. He was the youth to whom Cheval, later on, confided the task of leadership and afterward dolefully said, "He wasn't built that way."

"Who are *we?*" the professor asked, addressing the last speaker, after contemplating him searchingly, awhile, and accompanying the question with one of those irresistible smiles that made him so winning with all the students, as well as with every one else.

"The affiliated secret societies! They are *we!*" all the boys responded in a chorus.

"We have found every one and everything combining against and trying to whip us in detail," spoke the closely compressed lips of the boy with the keen blue eyes.

"So all the societies have formed a union and we'll make it hot, devilish hot! for all such truck as Quantrell, if they don't hands off!"

"'United we stand and divided we fall,' is our motto. It's an ancient chestnut, of course, but there ain't any worms in it, and there ain't any flies on us! Let those who would like to harm Cedar-Crest College, or any of its representatives, put that in their pipes and smoke it," he added, vehemently.

"You promised me you would stop using slang, Fred," said the professor, reproachfully.

"I *did* promise—*to try*," was the response, "but"—desperately—"somehow it will slip out and I get there when I don't think."

"Oh he's not half so bad as he was!" cried bright eyes, coming to the rescue.

"Well don't 'let up' on your endeavor and you'll soon conquer," added Cheval, with a merry twinkle.

And then he joined the boys in the laugh his own use of slang provoked, and they parted, as before stated, with mutual warm expressions of regard and hearty good-byes.

"So so!" muttered Cheval, under his breath, after they had gone.

"Here then is the unknown quantity, the real potent, greatest factor in all this sum of outrageous mischief.

"Yes, the '*Union*' of the societies is the back-bone of the whole business!

"It must be broken!"

And forthwith he laid his plans to break it.

And he hit on the right means to reach his purposed end. He was at once a human sleuth-hound unleashed and fairly on the trail—minus the savagery.

This meeting, just recorded of a little coterie of bright youths at his study, was not an isolated and unusual occurrence; similar meetings were frequent, and, with singular tact, the professor had at them just the parties who, in course of time, would prove useful allies on the side of law and order, in the movement he was planning to dissolve the secret societies, grown so pernicious, without noise, friction or any pyrotechnic parade of power. Little by little he had inspired in the breasts of these boys, some of them indolent, others active enough but in the wrong direction, and spendthrifts and not studious, a hearty ambition to succeed and deserve wholesome praise. And a growing high sense of manly honor that they were not afraid to boast of. And he listened attentively and amusedly to their candid and oft-times enthusiastic recital of the successes and failures of the various mischievous pranks of themselves and others.

And his frowns, or mildly protesting remarks when he would say,

"That was downright meanness—absolute!" or,

"Why, *that* savors of bullyism and—cowardice;" or,

"That was unduly severe and unprovoked, I shall lose my respect for him if he is ever so atrocious again."

These and similar comments did more to divert their, hitherto misdirected, strong animal exuberance into channels of harmless, if not ultimate beneficial dissipation and real usefulness, than all the chapel lectures and exhortations, and spasmodic reigns of

stringent discipline, and "examples," by way of suspensions and expulsions, put together.

* * * * * *

A special meeting of the college faculty, with closed doors, was held that eventful Saturday night, and a secret session was resolved on, for the following Tuesday night, to investigate Moultrie's and other cases. The truly honest and conscientious professor of classics, in an earnest and, for him, impassioned speech, held that, to exclude the townspeople, during their investigation, was unAmerican. Especially would it be a grievous injustice, he said, to exclude those who had suffered in the demolition of or injury to their property, and he urged that such sufferers were entitled to all the encouragement the faculty could extend in the prompt prosecution of the trespassers. But he was voted down. He did not know of wily Quantrell's designs.

Further on we will see how the collegians took it. Before the Tuesday night session, for the investigation had rolled around, the college secret societies had met in more than one important convocation.

When that night did arrive, it was cloudy and very dark. Otherwise, issuing from houses in the town, here and there, could have been seen numerous young men, all directing their footsteps toward one common rendezvous. Most of the students roomed in private houses.

They were a grotesque looking assemblage, when, having donned their disguises, all were congregated at that out of the way little building, known, far and wide, as "Buzzard's Roost." And there was a wealth of fun in the roll-call of ridiculous nom-de-plumes, pronounced in a guttural, disguised voice, by the keeper of the records.

"Is the owl ready?" spoke one, apparently chief, after all had responded to their names, and the inspector had passed down the line, scrutinizing each

face closely, the mask being removed, as he approached each in succession.

"The owl is ready; its mission is to hoot!" (which meant that no spies were present and everything was in readiness for the business they had assembled to transact), replied a stoutish domino, about five feet four inches "tall," in a deep, bass voice.

"'Tis well!" responded the chief. "Every brother to his task and 'I'm sick, send for McGinnis!'"

At this order there was a general scattering.

Meanwhile, the faculty had assembled at the college parlors, and the accused students and witnesses were in waiting in adjoining rooms.

Business was begun, and the hour of nine pealed forth soon thereafter, from the sweet-toned chapel bell, which had formerly called to masses and matins the hooded monks of a Mexican monastery, in Chihuahua, and the metal of which was largely silver.

The old inscription on it was half obliterated, for this bell had been cast, centuries ago, in old Spain, and had reached, on mule back, the now abandoned adobe tower in which it had hung many decades, daily summoning to their devotions the mongrel population within hearing of the melodious clatter of its tongue.

To Cedar-Crest College it had been donated by an old graduate, with considerable of both money and brains, who had stumbled on it, during his insatiate quest for new scenes, and trophies, and adventures, in Mexico and Central and South America.

As the last musical strokes of the hour died away, both barrels of a shot-gun were discharged, immediately under one of the windows of the college parlors.

And this was the signal for a perfect fusillade. A perfect pandemonium of noises. The air was split, and rent and torn with the ringing of all sizes of cow-bells and hand-bells, the blowing of a seeming myriad of shrill whistles, the blaring of numerous

trumpets, the beating of a score of noisy drums and the firing of many pistols.

But, above all this deafening din, like the bellowing of forty mad bulls, or the so-called music of a dozen discordant calliopes, there arose a tremendous, indefinable roar and shriek combined that, in the stillness of the dark night, brought wondering people to their outer doors, for miles around.

Several fence rails had been scraped with glass, resin had been melted and poured on dry-goods boxes, that had been purloined from Quantrell and other inimical village merchants, and out of these had been constructed the mammoth bass viols or "horse fiddles" that gave forth these appalling, inimitable and indescribable sounds.

The resin had been cemented thickly to the boxes, across which the rails were moved as a violin bow is drawn across the strings of a violin. While the uproar lasted it was impossible for the faculty to proceed with the business in hand, or even hear each other talk.

Although orgies of the kind had disturbed the nocturnal stillness of Cedar Crest many a time before, nothing to compare in magnitude with this had ever occurred in the history of the college.

The faculty was misled by the fact that no protest against the secret investigation had been lodged by the students, and mistakenly accepted the demonstration as an act of hostility on the part of the towns-people.

That the destruction of some of the park trees, and disfiguration of the buildings would ensue, seemed imminent to the president, and he was greatly worried.

Cheval, who had faced fully as furious dins more than once in the heat of battle, during "the late unpleasantness," and had lain through many sleepless nights, in wild Western camps, listening to the hideous howling of ravenous wolves, was neither worried nor awed in the least, but smiled amusedly,

now and then, as extra bursts swelled the prevailing clamor.

Finally the president, in half a dozen written lines, proposed a plan of action.

He intimated that the raiders would probably be well armed with venerable eggs, and other disagreeable missiles of that ilk, and possibly a few dead cats, or rats, or both ; that they would not hesitate at violence to prevent detection, and that although lives might be safe enough, if the faculty essayed a sally against them, those in the sortie might be forced to return bearing that character of undesirable souvenirs on their person.

On the other hand, was it quite the thing to sit there quietly and submit to this interruption of their lawful deliberation? and the probable greater or less spoliation of the property entrusted to their care ?

He presented these points for the consideration of the professors and requested their views briefly, in writing, since, because of the noise, he could not get at them orally.

He assumed, *ab initio*, that the serenaders were principally rowdies, with perhaps a few disaffected, respectable citizens, present more as mere lookers-on than as participants.

Differing opinions resulted. Only one of which seemed note-worthy, however, and that was by the assistant professor of mathematics.

A queer little man, about five feet three inches high, weighing about ninety pounds, having a face with bald eyebrows, two-thirds of which was a forehead that pitched forward, at an angle of twenty degrees.

The ten or twelve sickly-looking hairs on his thin upper lip showed prominently or were obscure, according as his complexion was white or red.

If he blushed, and he was capable of that frailty, each individual hair stood out and asserted itself, like a drum-major on dress parade. If, from sickness, perchance, or any other cause, he was haggard,

they retired to the background, as if in sympathy, and were discernible only at close quarters, and on close inspection.

The professor had a falsetto voice, which was always pitched in proportion to his excitement. He was eccentric to a marked degree, and said and did many odd and ridiculous, as well as many wise and kindly things, out of the common ways. Some of the less respectful of the students brazenly asserted that certain ingenious minds from among them had invented a psychologic scale, which, suspended in the same room where he was speaking, would, as unerringly as a thermometer—and discounting "much times" a barometer—record the extent to which the spirit moved him. "The *great* difficulty" to overcome, was that said scale could not define the *kind* of spirit.

And hence it was not infallibly safe. For, sometimes, when it was fondly hoped a beneficent halo was suffusing his face, deluded believers thereof were most rudely shocked to find, instead, that, in a minor way, "Sheol was to pay."

The invention was in fact not *comme il faut.*

It was more thoroughly unsatisfactory than a Keely motor. Somewhat excitedly the little professor handed to the anxiety-weighted president his answer to his note. "Differing demands," he wrote, "appeal to us in this trying emergency. First, we are called to assert our dignity. Then, we are warned to remain in *statu quo* until our lawless disturbers withdraw from sheer exhaustion. I will abide by the decision of the majority. Let us have no hesitancy. But, if it says, *Go forth promptly and subject yourselves to the jeers and shameful humiliation that will surely signalize our advent outside*, then I will so abide under most solemn protest and would rather not participate."

By this time quite a large crowd was wending its way from the town to the college, bent on "seeing the fun." And a cold, drizzling rain had set in.

Cheval, alert, had been listening intently, behind the curtain at one of the windows, for some moments.

Now, with a satisfied, rather delighted gleam in his eyes, he handed the president a folded note, hastily scribbled, which the latter read and, smiling pleasantly, inquiringly, nodded "Yes." Whereupon Cheval walked out.

He was gone not more than ten minutes when he reappeared, arrayed in a ludicrous disguise, and announced to the astounded faculty that the serenaders were students, fraters of the "Greek-Letter clans."

The faculty, greatly surprised, thereupon immediately sallied forth in a body, and each professor, independent of the others, was instructed to make his best endeavor to capture and identify some one, repairing finally to his home, and reporting results the next morning at chapel.

But later on these instructions were changed.

Let us follow in the drift of events on that memorable night for Cedar-Crest College, as they are described in the next chapter.

They were the all-absorbing topic of discussion in the town, and throughout the adjacent county, for many a day, and sealed the doom of secret societies at that school, forever.

And, with the demise of the secret societies, a healthy tone sprang up. Hazing almost entirely died out, and the number of students increased largely.

A military branch was added, presided over by a regular army officer, ordered from some artillery seaboard garrison by the President of the United States, and the students, as cadets, expended much of their surplus animal vitality in sabre exercise and infantry drill, with just the same kind of "Cadet Rifles" as are used at West Point, and maneuvered also with three-inch field-guns, many of the boys becoming, in the course of time, excellent cannoniers, fine swordsmen and good riflemen.

CHAPTER III.

THE COLLEGE REBELLION ADVANCES APACE.

IF the faculty had imagined they were going to capture the offenders in the events just narrated, and whom they were now so valiantly sallying forth against, they soon found they had egregiously miscalculated.

There were bearded men, of twenty odd years, as well as shrewd, sharp-witted, and quick-footed boys in the besieging party, and all the participants belonged to secret societies, that had planned with completeness, and were carrying out their preconcertions with precision.

The whole affair had been, in fact, superbly organized, even to the least important details, all of which were carefully adhered to in the execution.

Sentinels had been posted to guard against any attempted constabulary surprise from town, and others, at the various exits of the college building, to guard against just such a one as the professors were attempting, when they made their sortie; and Cheval had succeeded in issuing from the basement and mingling with the serenaders, and had found out their identity merely because of his effectual disguise previously put on.

The boys had been too much absorbed in their mischievous work to notice him critically, and because of his strange costume were all unsuspicious of the advent among them of a member of the faculty, arrayed in ridiculous domino much like their own.

One daring young fellow, sweet-faced, of lovely disposition and brave as could be, and as agile as a cat, had climbed a lightning-rod and, at great risk, had crawled along the broad, projecting brick coping of the second story, to where he could peer into

an unshuttered window of the college parlors, where the faculty were assembled, and under which the noisiest of his comrades were making night hideous.

Even this young man, who had seen Professor Cheval leave the room, had no thought that he would disguise himself as he had.

But when he saw him return he understood it all.

He was too late, however, for any warning he might attempt to give could not reach his comrades below. No signs of his could arrest their attention, and no call he could make could possibly be heard by them.

The din prevailing was too deafening.

Long before he could descend to them, the faculty would be in their midst, and therefore, making a virtue of necessity, he snuggled down on his perch, closely, so as to present the least possible surface for observation, and awaited results.

There he remained for half an hour through the bitter, biting blasts that blew from the North, and the cold rain that chilled and drenched and stiffened him, making his return to the friendly lightning-rod and descent to terra firma when that could, at last, be done safely, a much more difficult and dangerous undertaking than climbing to his perilous perch had been.

Finally, after the janitor had extinguished all the lights, and the college park was deserted, silent, and dark, save the dismal noise made by the trees swayed by the soughing, moisture-freighted wind, and the beating of the storm, he cautiously crept over to and down the lightning-rod to the ground, and, with inward vowing that he would never be caught in such a plight again, hurried to his room and, while undressing, ran his eyes over a short, curt note lying on his table, directing him to explain at Chapel, the next morning, his whereabouts at 10 P. M. that night.

"I'm in for it," he sighed, and went to bed, but

not to prayers the next morning, for, just two weeks from that hour his corpse was taken eastward on the cars, for final interment at his mother's home.

Poor Boy!

A severe cold, caught by exposure that night, and resultant fever and sore throat, had kept him confined to his bed until he had died.

Let us return to the college and learn what happened to his comrades and the faculty.

Headed by the president, the latter had hurried toward the north exit, but had hardly reached the bottom of the basement stairway and turned down the hall, when up went a glaring, hissing skyrocket from that front of the building, and, as if by magic, the din ceased instantly and entirely, all save a few horns and cow-bells on the west side, retreating towards the woods.

"There is something Napoleonic in this," said Cheval to the president, enthusiastically.

The several professors issued valiantly from the building, completely blinded, however, by the sudden change from the bright light within, to the pitchy darkness without.

They paused a few moments, and then Cheval, who declared he knew every inch of the ground, volunteered to make a wide detour and come in behind "those saucy fellows in the west, who seemed to be hurling defiance" at them, if some one would advance directly against them, slowly, guided by the noise.

The president suggested that the assistant professor of mathematics do the latter, laughingly adding that;

"He is so small in physique and thin, he could pounce on them before they suspected his approach, since he has such a huge building as the college for a background, shutting out his outline entirely against the eastern horizon."

The little fellow demurred, rather snappishly, and

was much irritated at the allusion to his diminutiveness.

"I'm sure I'm not so *astonishingly* small, that you should make my stature the subject of such especial mention," he said, pettishly, in a squeaky voice.

"You are just the man I should have asked for if the doctor had not so happily anticipated me," interposed Cheval, encouragingly, laughing quietly meanwhile.

"By going directly for those sounds and lanterns, you can drive them directly into my arms.

"Take your time about it, however, and don't fall over any brush-heaps or logs.

"They have been cutting timber over that way, and you'll find lots of them.

"I was through there after some squirrels this very afternoon."

The little fellow said, with some trepidation, as though he wished it would be all right if he refused utterly to move:

"I will go, of course; I esteem it my *duty*, but really, I do not believe I will catch anyone or anything, except my death of cold!"

So he went.

And it would have been better for him if he had not. The other members of the faculty were then assigned less disagreeable tasks. The rooms in the town occupied by students were divided up among them, and each professor hurried to visit those allotted him, to ascertain who were, and who were not, at home, before the participants in that night's work could get there first.

And many were the tricks resorted to by the boisterous serenaders to hoodwink and mislead them.

It had been preconcerted, in the secret societies, when this very emergency was discussed in conclave, that the students who reached their rooms beforehand should, on the visit of one of the faculty, which they felt sure would occur, feign sleep and respond

tardily and only at the last moment possible, admit him.

It had also been prearranged that those residing at a considerable distance should turn in with those rooming nearer the college, in order that no treacherous or unfriendly citizen should discover and betray them.

The few horns and cow-bells, still insolently sounding in the west, constituted a sort of rear-guard to cover the retreat of the main body. This rear-guard was composed of half a dozen Good Templars.

Six miles away a sister organization gave a literary entertainment on that night, followed by a festival, and these students of the rear-guard belonged to the number who had received leave to attend.

It was a rule of the college that students must be in their rooms at night unless especially permitted to be absent, and then their whereabouts must be stated.

They made known beforehand where they wanted to go, when they applied for the permission, and at chapel the next morning, when they responded to their names at roll-call, reported in writing where they had been while absent.

The " rear-guard " men were therefore absent by authority, and could keep up their racket to divert the attention of the faculty from those who must retire speedily to their rooms, as long as suited their own sweet wills, or at least until captured or discovered. They need have no fear of consequences unless that occurred.

Among this rear-guard was Fatty Forbush, as jolly, shrewd, and rotund a mischief breeder as ever growled at the Greek alphabet.

Forbush was eighteen years old, five feet six inches high and weighed two hundred and twenty pounds. He was very broad shouldered and for his great rotundity of body very small limbed.

These very proportions actually made him comely,

after a fashion, and no doubt accounted for his extraordinary agility.

He was "captain" of the rear-guard, and all his orders were carried out with the alacrity and precision of military disipline.

Fatty's features were a study. Across the room, where, on account of distance, you could not discern the intelligence in the clear, brown, twinkling eyes, and the fun lurking in the corners of the handsome mouth, the face looked like some of the comic almanac pictures of the full moon. So every one said.

There was a saucy defiance in the pug nose, and decision of character in the square chin, that resolutely asserted itself in spite of the wealth of contiguous fat, bulging out from the neck.

His skin was as soft and as velvety as a girl's—some girls—his complexion roseate—red and white —his hair blonde and cut very short.

And his head—some of the seminary girls used to exclaimed—"Oh, that *head!*"

In the language of juvenile geography, "his head was round, like a ball or an apple!"

When the little professor, who was very near-sighted, carefully wiped his spectacles, and in a piping voice said, "Good-night, gentlemen," it began to rain furiously.

On he went however, toward the taunting noises, when suddenly—directly in his path and not a hundred yards ahead—a torch was lighted, whose ruddy rays lent weird and fantastic shapes to the trees and their changing shadows, and exposed to view a copy of

"THE OWL," a paper issued clandestinely by the societies, posted on a decayed stump, and illuminated with phophorescent headlines.

The professor halted a moment, somewhat startled, glanced at it, and began to seriously debate the propriety of proceeding further.

"Was there an ambush ahead, and would it be

better discretion not to seek to uncover it, or would it pay to push on?" he asked himself.

His reflections were interrupted by a loud hooting, a well-feigned imitation of the night-bird whose name the placard bore.

Its nearness caused him to start again, yet he could discern nothing in the darkness. The torch had been extinguished and only the phosphoric headlines of

"THE OWL" lit up with a ghostly light the surroundings—

"WHO—WHO—WHO ARE YOU!!!"

Reverberated through the leafy recesses of the woods, and was repeated again and again, from different points in the bosky depths.

Only a moment did the little man give way to his sudden alarm and misgiving, and then—he was really brave—he dashed quickly toward the nearest of the taunting sounds.

A pack of fire-crackers at the same moment was set off by "Fatty" Forbush, for it was he who had flourished the torch, and they served to guide the professor in his pursuit.

Fatty had discovered his identity, and felt sure he could lead him wheresoever he would, and at the same time elude capture or discovery himself, if followed by no one else. So he pushed deeper and deeper into the dense forest, dropping the fire-crackers constantly, and entirely unsuspicious of Cheval's flank movement.

"This is ghostly, ghoulish, hideous!" exclaimed the little professor, in a paryoxism of rage, as he wrenched his foot between two projecting roots of a veteran forest giant, topheavy and soon to fall, the same as overloaded brains ofttimes prostrate not deeply rooted physical developments.

"Nothing good can ever come to the instigators and actors concerned in it.

"It is absolutely devlish!" he ejaculated with unusual vehemence as he struck the big toe of his

stub boot against another protruding but unconsciously offending root.

And then he said, yes, reader, he, the little professor said—"Darn it all!" as he almost fell prostrate over a vine in which he had haplessly entangled his right foot.

For a moment he stopped and lifting his eyes skyward exclaimed, in protesting tones—

"For what on earth are we poor teachers—we outraged instructors of rising generations made? Are we created to be the mere playthings of babbling youths and half-formed specimens of prospective mental and moral, but ultimately thoroughly educated human deformities—inborn with ineradicable depravity?"

But the dear little man with all his good and bad, and indifferent reflections was not permitted to ruminate over them long, although he was getting deep into the forest where, like in the pastures, all is usually quiet, and ample opportunity for rumination in its most primitive form is afforded. But he stopped and began to deliberate.

Bang! Bang!! Bang!!! rang out the reports of a pistol which echoed and re-echoed in demon-like reverberations throughout the dark woods and gave a ghastly aspect to the down pouring rain, the moaning and shrieking and whistling and sighing of the winds through the foliage, and the lightning and thunder and sudden owl-hooting from seeming various directions.

"Ah! These wicked young Wizards! these candidates for prison halls! Why, oh why should we waste our tuition powder on them only to ripen and sharpen their debased minds, and enable them the more adroitly and successfully, through the very agency of their education, to ply their instinctive wickedness and gather in the fell fruits thereof!" Alas! Poor deluded man, at different times in later years, he grasped by the hand some of these same youthful miscreants he was now so impolitely con-

demning, clad in the garb and boasting the prestige and prerogatives of senators, judges, great lawyers, generals and even clergymen, and boasted of them as his former pupils.

Modern wisdom has at last solved the problem, lifted the veil, and disclosed the wisest way for the expenditure of superabundant animal spirits, and, colleges, everywhere, now encourage, to the fullest scope, all kinds of manly and womanly athletic, and diverting and satisfying sports, and innocent recreations as the outlet therefor.

Modern scholastic wisdom, tempered with common sense and sagacity, is a good thing to have on deck and at the helm, where formation of character is the proposed cruise, and perfection the desired ultimate harbor.

Fortunately for him, Fatty Forbush had directed his course south-westerly, while Cheval's detour, after scaling the college fence, had been north-westerly. The noise of the discharging fire-crackers and pistol, however, had caused Cheval to change direction, and hurry toward them, and finally, just as the last of the last pack gave out, "Fatty" reached the point he was decoying the little professor to, and jumping over a small brush pile, cleared a narrow puddle of water, just beyond, and turned and stopped suddenly, reiterating, as naturally as any real owl could, his ominous sounding:

"Who—who—who are you?"

Straightway the Professor, who, by half a minute's delay, Fatty had permitted to come quite close, rushed toward the sound, totally oblivious of the intervening brush pile and puddle.

He reached it, he plunged into it, and then fell, sprawling, with arms outstretched, into it.

A terrific, shrieking, hideous, maniacal laugh rent the air in response and resounded, with awful distinctness, through the leafy aisles of the deep forest, from Fatty, who, just in the nick of time, and not an instant too soon, discerned the tall figure of Profes-

sor Cheval rapidly approaching on his flank. Now, all was intense darkness, save the fitful flashes of lightning by which he had discovered him, and the rain fell in torrents.

Fatty was unsurpassed as a mimic, he was considered a real genius in that respect, and could have made a fortune on the stage.

But he was no match in a foot-race for Cheval, who had the eye of a hawk, and the fleetness of a deer, and unless he could elude him by some stratagem—to quote his own expressive, but not strictly elegant words,—he was "a goner."

Therefore, after quickly passing back around the brush pile to the side from where the little Professor had fallen over it, and retreating several yards toward the college, he cried out in perfect imitation of that gentleman's voice:

"Stop, you young rascals! stop instantly, I say! I know who you are, every one of you!" and more to the same effect, retreating the meanwhile, and Cheval was completely deceived.

Then Fatty hurried on cautiously and noiselessly, arriving in due time at his room, which had not been visited by any of the faculty, since he was "absent by permission," in supposed attendance at the Good Templar entertainment, six miles away.

"Hold on, professor!" shouted Cheval at the top of his full, round, melodious voice:

"Here is one of your culprits come to sudden grief," then with some sharpness:

"Get up out of that mire, young man, and let me have a good look at you!"

"Help me find my glasses, Cheval," came faintly in response, from the little professor.

"Great Jove! Is that you?" exclaimed Cheval.

"I thought I heard you chasing some of the boys off there," pointing south.

"No, it was someone else, perhaps the young miscreant himself who led me into this trap. I see it all now, he took advantage of my blindness."

"Oh, if I could only get hold of him!" And the little man shook his fist impotently, and pursed his lips.

"Who was it, did you make him out?" queried Cheval, with quavering voice, hardly able to suppress a roar at the demoralized tone and appearance of his companion, as far as the lightning flashes would permit him to discern him.

Poor little fellow! He was indeed in a sad plight for one so fastidious, so scrupulously neat and dapper in person and attire.

Cheval afterward—in narrating the occurrence confidentially to the President, said, that if he had been actually walking on it all through that rainy night his left ear could not have been filled fuller of mud.

It was, without doubt, "downright mean"—pardon the Westernism—for these two, so generally considered above all such phases of enjoyment, to discuss so jocosely, and comment so merrily on, and laugh so heartily, at this sad discomfiture of that gallant little man, and especially, so irreverently, right in the sanctum-sanctorum of the college, the president's inner room, with the large plaster busts of so many great ancients—Greek and Roman—statesmen, poets and philosophers, looking serenely down on them from their several niches in the walls, finished off in rich and exquisitely conceived and singularly appropriate classic frescoes.

Yet the two, the sedate and reverend president and the dignified yet jocular professor did enjoy themselves as thoroughly over the mishaps of their little friend as they ever enjoyed boyhood fun in their own school-boy days.

It was the little professor's left foot that had tangled in the brush-heap, and on his left side he had fallen. Fallen heavily on his left shoulder, directly into the middle of the puddle, and then, following the inevitable law of momentum, his left ear had performed, if not gracefully, nevertheless per-

fectly and thoroughly, the office of a scoop, going down among the sediment of dead leaves and loam at the bottom of the shallow pool, and dragging his head after it so that his nose, mouth, and left eye were submerged.

His immaculate shirt, cuffs and choker collar looked as though they had been for a protracted period, "down among the coal mines underneath the ground."

Absent-mindedly he rose, one hand clutching its fill of mud gathered in his frantic hunt for his spectacles.

Cheval promised to assist him home through the prevailing darkness, and come with him quietly the next day and join in a search for them, for they were a valuable pair of glasses.

And it was fortunate indeed that he was on hand to help him home, elsewise Heaven only knows what would have become of the brave little man, out in that storm, unknowing his whereabouts and with neither compass nor guide to help him.

He would have perished.

Fatty Forbush escaped, undiscovered even by Cheval, and was not even suspected, neither by the faculty nor the towns-people.

At 8:30 o'clock the next morning the chapel bell commenced tolling for prayers, and he was there as serene and tranquil as a summer morn.

The bell was always tolled for five minntes, before morning devotions. The janitor had thrown open the doors, but had left as he had found them all the evidences, around and about the edifice, of the previous night's mischief.

In the quaint, high-backed arm-chair of the Professor of Natural Sciences, which properly should have been on the rostrum in that professor's lecture room, but was now on the broad, chapel steps, was the human skeleton belonging to his recitation-room holding in its fleshless fingers a copy of "THE OWL."

On the chapel door conspicuously posted was another copy of that euphoniously named paper, and sewed to a red flag at half staff, hanging from an upper front window, was a third.

Placards innumerable were also pasted on the college park trees on which were written :

"DOWN WITH THE INQUISITION !!!"

"THE OWL" contained one especially scathing article giving a history of that institution in Spain ; and declared it had been resurrected from its uncanny grave, and transplanted to Cedar-Crest College.

Several satirical paragraphs, denunciatory of secret sessions of the faculty in the interest of town-folks, and other articles, appeared caricaturing different professors, and ridiculing and abusing them shamefully.

On one huge elm was a cartoon showing citizens, Si Quantrell and one or two others drawn to life, presenting to the faculty charges against certain students, the head officers of the secret societies especially.

Below this was another representing Moultrie De Kalb proving an alibi, and still another wherein Si Quantrell and the other citizens of his group were represented as insisting, angrily, and the President is bowing cringing compliance while he kicks Moultrie.

To say that these surprised every member of the faculty is a very faint expression indeed of their feelings.

They were simply astounded !

They could not believe their senses—was it possible that their action in holding a secret session could be so misjudged, or was there some deep trickery back of it all?

The time at chapel that morning was considerably protracted beyond what was usual.

The doors were locked—foolish shortsighted act—and two professors walked through the aisles to note if any *but* students were present.

The precaution seemed simply ridiculous, for who could expect three hundred boys to successfully keep a secret, or even divulge it with strict adherence to truth. Not that there would be willful falsehood. Oh! no. But because every mind notes the same remark, or affair, or occurrence, or incident from a different standpoint, different conditions habitually controlling different persons and invariably leading to different conclusions, however insignificant the difference, shades, or different points of observation may be; especially is this true with young people.

There was one element to which the good president, in a wounded tone, addressed his feeling remarks, at the conclusion of the usual chapel service, that could not be in the least conciliated.

The voice of the dear old man trembled, as he pointed out, to those responsible for these displays, the injustice of their course, if what was announced in the placards they had secretly the previous night posted was a true index of their honest convictions.

He then candidly informed the students why he had advocated investigation with closed doors, and so feelingly and eloquently did he repudiate the charge of inquisitorial motives that more than one head hung, shame-faced, at the sound of his softly intoned but manly, dignified and ringing words.

The element that was not conciliated was the village contingent to the ranks of the school, the sons, in two cases, of notoriously disaffected citizens.

Locking the doors against eaves-droppers, with these fellows present, was worse than inviting the villagers to turn out en masse, and listen to any open attempt at a vindication to the students by the faculty, of the action cited. It would have been better, far better to have carried the war into the enemies' country, and hired a hall in town for the purpose of pronouncing that vindication.

Nevertheless, the grand old man, by his eloquence

and patience, and the goodness that shone from his face and echoed in his voice, won every rebel to allegiance to himself, and after this the investigation went on successfully, and there were no further disturbances of any kind on the college premises.

Both collegians and citizens became deeply interested and awaited the outcome with anxiety.

Outwitted and defeated at the college, Si Quantrell bestirred himself, industriously, among certain irresponsible, gabbling, and vapory students, and a few citizens whom he could mould to his will, and remembered as lookers-on at the charivari, and left no stone unturned, no effort unexerted, to fix a case against Moultrie. The very difficulties that obstructed seemed to spur his malignity the more.

But Moultrie, besides the secret societies, had two good and true friends in town, a widow lady and her daughter, a kind of friends seldom reckoned on in such an emergency. The husband of the lady had been a confederate officer in Hood's army, and the wife and child, who were from Nashville, Tennessee, had seen him last near Franklin, the night before that terrible day of the great battle of that name, fought in December, 1864, fatal alike to so many brave men in both blue and gray.

Gallantly had Colonel Poinsett charged with his regiment against the Union earth-works, and when the repulsed survivors of his command fell back they left him, they supposed dead, lying prone on the bloody field, in the hands of the enemy, and surrounded by numerous other dead and mortally wounded comrades.

Mrs. Poinsett and Bertha had lived in Cedar-Crest not quite three years. She had moved from Tennessee to that locality, to occupy and improve property received by bequest, or dispose of it if the surroundings proved uninviting.

Many causes combined to keep her there long after her judgment had suggested a dignified retreat to some other place, where she could live unmolest-

edly, without being forced to publish or have published, by meddlesome gossips, all her domestic privacies.

There was in Cedar-Crest the same amount of Paul Pryism usual in villages, where neighbors keep posted as to the daily bills of fare and the incomings and outgoings of each other, and think it all right and proper.

Mrs. Poinsett had not been used to this, but she was no sooner settled in her handsome cottage, with its tidy and pretty grounds and lovely shrubbery, than the principal village dames called, according to custom, and drew from her all they could regarding her previous history. And she narrated it unreservedly.

As a result the general verdict was, at first, in her favor. She was proclaimed "charming" and "lovely," and the least said was that she was "interesting." But as time rolled on, and, from a disinclination to go out save when compelled by some pressing duty, she neglected to return those calls, all she had said to her visitors was resurrected, and turned over and over, and adversely commented on and garbled and misrepresented. They believed she had deliberately snubbed them, and such a thought had never entered her mind.

Mrs. Wades, for instance, surmised something suspicious and not quite the thing you know to Mrs. Smitheree, and Mrs. Smitheree repeated it, with added condemnation, to Mrs. Calladay as a *fact*. And unlike a rolling stone, it gathered moss as it traveled.

Among other things it was claimed that, by her own admission, she, aided by a few faithful and devoted slaves, had wanted to, if she had not actually in person, applied the torch that set the fire that burned Franklin, on the terrible and blood-fraught night that General Schofield's army retreated toward Nashville, under cover of darkness; she, hoping by the deed to so light up the back ground that the

confederates, under Hood, would be able to detect and thwart the movement.

Mrs. Poinsett, who was in Franklin on that memorable night, had graphically depicted some of the stirring scenes that transpired, and had enthused, somewhat, on what she had chosen to denominate "the valor of our boys in gray." But she had been so vivacious and charming at the time of the rehearsal, that the incident was not turned as a weapon against her until after her antipathy for gossip had condemned her as being all together "too self-contained."

It was a singular fact, however, that those ladies who sought to make capital off these, to say the least, indiscreet utterances of the little widow were, all, the wives of men who stayed safely at home during the war, and two of them, who had been drafted, paid each $1,000 for a substitute.

This gossip was silly, of course. But there were some people in Cedar-Crest foolish enough to swallow such stuff as "gospel truth," and, as politics and sectionalism were, by interested parties, principally political bummers who had never smelled hostile gunpowder, kept to the fore in that little burg, about that period, poor little Miss Poinsett and her "onsociable" mother had to silently endure the senseless detraction this falsehood inflicted. That they were women made no difference.

Of course there were others, sensible, chivalrous, generous, who did not make war on a defenceless woman.

As a result the Poinsett friendship for Moultrie was, in the village, no feather in his cap. He had been told as much, and had been advised to court the society of the other more popular belles.

Moultrie had, however, taken a great fancy to graceful little Bertha, and could not be persuaded.

She and her mother were great companions for each other, more like loving sisters than anything else. With their own society and the occasional,

lately frequent, visits of Moultrie, they seemed perfectly content. Not that they disliked any Cedar-Crestians, or failed to enjoy the visits of those who refrained from scandal, or successfully disguised the fact that their visits were in the nature of a social reconnaisance.

They were exceedingly attractive, if not fascinating, in converation.

Moultrie one day said to his mother, quite bitterly, that "envy and malice, from which they ought to pray the good Lord to deliver them, was what ailed the Cedar-Crest people in their estimate of the Poinsetts."

CHAPTER IV.

BERTHA POINSETT, MOULTRIE'S SWEETHEART, AND HER FRIEND.

BERTHA had one devoted chum, Lydia Waring, the daughter of the college president. And whenever Bertha and she met there was a veritable session of a mutual admiration society.

One morning, clad in a gown of fleecy, soft, white stuff, trimmed in brown, and wearing a rustic straw hat, festooned with wild flowers and brown ribbon, the color of her eyes, she tripped gayly up the Poinsett lawn, and in a moment was with Bertha, seated under the grape arbor, chirruping all those little nothings so dear to the hearts of schoolgirls.

As Lydia never married, she cannot possibly pose in any very fascinating or conspicuous attitude in this "o'er true tale," but, because of her close affiliation with other charming people who do, she must be photographed so you will always be able to recognize her. I must confess that I am not an ex-

pert artist, and that she is a difficult subject to accurately portray, one that would task the skill of the most accomplished and finished limner, armed with a perfect achromatic equipment.

She was stylish without ostentation, lithesome as a willow, and naturally, but unconsciously, graceful. Her complexion was red-and-white, her forehead low, and suggestive that she was the offspring of successive generations of scholars. Her hair, in color, matched her matchless eyes; beautiful brown eyes, of that brown so rare, and which changes in shade with each changing mood, as her hair changed in tint under the varying sheen of the sun. They were soft, sympathetic, honest eyes, but they could blaze, on provocation. Her lips were of a rich red, her teeth perfect, and when she smiled there was a pronounced dimple in each velvety cheek. She had small hands and feet, was gracefully formed, had an open, honest face, and believed she was thoroughly practical. Boasted, in fact, that there was no nonsense about her, yet, silly little goose, she was the greatest lover of the nonsensical in the whole of Cedar-Crest.

She had a habit of closing her eyes, and appearing much interested and pleased whenever any nonsense was uttered.

But it was when she was in deep meditation that those rare eyes possessed their greatest charm. It was the glorious, Cleopatra-like darkening that bewitched. And the flush that suffused the face was enchanting. The mouth became a poem. And beautifully curved dimples built their nests in its exquisitely turned corners. Lydia was, by everyone, voted an unusual girl, surpassingly attractive, intelligent, lovable, endearing.

Not a charitable move was put on foot in Cedar-Crest in which she did not figure conspicuously.

Bertha and she were close and confidential friends.

There were not a few sore masculine hearts on account of this remarkable girl. But her armor of

determined single-blessedness was invulnerable against all the shafts in Cupid's well-filled quiver.

Although that youthful offspring of Venus persistently and incessantly discharged whole volleys at her heart, that impenetrable armor caught and cast them off like so many barbless straws fired from a popgun against a battleship. But there is an end to everything except time and space. And an end to Lydia's devotion to her mother and hostility to marriage seemed to have arrived shortly after the advent in Cedar-Crest of a distinguished-looking and wealthy stranger; an educated and pleasure-loving tourist.

It would be unfair both to Lydia and the reader not to introduce Mr. Blank, and spend an evening, at least, with the two and some of Lydia's friends, in the quiet library of her father.

Mr. Blank, in his history, was quite as remarkable as a man as Lydia was as a girl. From a restless, quick-witted youth, he had grown to be a sedate but ever active man, hungry incessantly for travel and new scenes and discoveries. His wonderful memory and keen perception, that had enabled him to at once master his text books at school, when a boy, had not deserted him. And his vitality, sturdiness, and almost continuous health had prevented any breaks or delays in his numerous long journeys, enabling him to complete them about the time he had calculated he would when starting out.

He was a fluent talker, vivid in description, and had a keen sense of the ludicrous, with which he skillfully garnished his narrations of his travels. He had never remained long in any one place or vocation, and had an insatiable desire for change. Having ample means at command to gratify that desire, his career had been as varied, perhaps, as that of any living man.

He had traveled the world o'er. Had ridden in sedan chairs and on the backs of camels, elephants and stalwart Africans. Had been among Comanches,

Mexicans, Malays and Mussulmen. Had been a farmer, merchant, postmaster, editor, army officer, college professor, insurance manager, and foreign newspaper correspondent. And had given the slap in the face to that time-worn adage "a rolling stone gathers no moss," for he had been, financially, the gainer in all his undertakings.

What called him to Cedar-Crest was to claim property he had inherited.

The only thing he had bankrupted in was matrimony. He became insolvent therein, when he discovered that his supposed investment in pure, golden love was mere tinsel. And since then he had been a wandering hermit. Though frequently tempted, his one great failure had made him cautious and, thus far, he had not again tried his luck in that market.

During his short stay in Cedar-Crest, Mr. Blank was a frequent visitor at Dr. Waring's, and Lydia esteemed, liked him, more than all the other men she had ever met put together. Something might have come of it had Mr. Blank ceased to remember the only risk in which he had ever failed.

Lydia listened with rapt attention to his always interesting and sometimes thrilling narrations of his travels, and noticed the elegance of his derivative language. She was very bright herself in Latin and English philology.

Only when Professor Cheval or Mr. Blank was present did Lydia entertain her callers in the library. It was her father's sanctum sanctorum, closed against all others. But she thought, surrounded by its books and busts, statuary and curios, it was the fit place in which to exchange intellectual yet simple language.

Therefore, when, one evening, because of their presence, she had invited several others there she was taken aback by the unexpected entrance of her father, who called out cheerily, "Surrender, you invaders! I have captured you en masse!"

Charades and tableaux were being arranged for a coming entertainment in behalf of charity.

Cheval had suggested an original poem as a feature.

"I don't see any use in poetry unless its "very funny," protested Lydia.

"Everything has its use," replied Cheval, smiling.

"Poetry is to the mind like flowers to the earth," put in Bertha, impulsively.

"I like practical things," responded Lydia.

"Tut, tut! Daughter!" exclaimed Dr. Waring.

"Well, I appeal to Mr. Blank," interposed Lydia. "Don't you think practical things are best? Most sensible?"

"Everthing is practical in its way." He answered. "It is practical with the florist to nurture his flowers, but it grows tedious ofttimes, and he sickens at sight of nature's loveliest aspect, before him, because the scene has grown monotonous."

"Well, flowers are not poetry," said Lydia, impatiently.

"Poetry, like music, has its usefulness," continued Mr. Blank; "and yet how weary musicians do grow of music. Yet music inspires, comforts and solaces. It can enthuse, soothe, pacify or infuriate."

"And ice cream, and candy, and cake; oh, cake!" said Cheval, solemnly. "How practical they are, especially at picnics and church fairs. Cake!" he cried, in mock ecstacy.

And Lydia looked at him with darkening eyes, and picked up a book for a missile. To use college slang, Lydia was "the boss cake-baker of the town."

Cheval continued, "Who dare say cake is not practical, and a good cake baker a jewel, a treasure? A priceless member of any family."

Just then the book and Lydia's hand parted company, and the professor sought refuge behind a pedestal that upheld a bust of Cicero.

Great traveler and close observer as he had been,

Mr. Blank thought he had never seen such fathomless, beautiful brown eyes as Lydia's. Unconscious earnestness lit up her speaking face.

That evening Mr. Blank spoke good bye to all, and at 2 a.m., was speeding toward New York to catch the steamship that was to bear him to England, en route for Norway. The image of Lydia Waring he bore with him, imprinted on his heart. But they never met again.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLIGHT OF MOULTRIE DE KALB.

PROFESSOR CHEVAL was more preoccupied than ever, after his conference with Dr. Waring. His active mind was busy planning foils for Quantrell's designs on Moultrie. He was not disposed to stand by, impassively, an idle looker-on, and, without interference, see the youth fall blindly and helplessly into the net spread for him.

" He shall not suffer from the malicious persecution of that unprincipled, revengeful scoundrel! He shall not be singled out!" Cheval resolved.

He, therefore, sent for Moultrie to come to Druid Hall, and when he arrived, first admonished him on no account to show any excitement at what he was about to reveal, but carefully control his feelings.

Then he pointed out in a kindly voice, that his manly, straightforward confession of participation in the charivari, so unfortunate in its consequences, must necessarily work his dismissal, but added, that it did not follow that he had criminally disgraced himself, or that he had done more than to seriously violate discipline, and, for him to tell the truth in re-

ference to himself so candidly as he had, and his refusal to implicate any comrades, evidenced (in Cheval's opinion) a moral courage that compelled him to step outside the lines of strict official propriety, and assert, by a little friendly warning and friendly action, the high esteem he held for him.

He then narrated to the young man, whose astonishment was more than great, all that had transpired between the president and himself in his behalf, and imparted certain additional information he had collected, showing Quantrell's fixed determination to prosecute him before the courts.

He impressed on Moultrie the absolute necessity of inviolate secresy, so as not to betray himself in the least, nor put Quantrell on his guard, and precipitate proceedings on that person's part, and then advised him to quietly prepare quickly to leave town.

"Keep perfectly calm, and let no one surmise you know what I have told you," was his parting admonition.

After further discussion, Moultrie expressed his determination to go to his uncle, from whom he had a long standing invitation to make a visit. This uncle was a wealthy citizen of Colorado, engaged in real estate, mining, and live stock concerns. He was also prominently connected with territorial affairs officially, and sincerely loved the young man, believing he had much talent. And Moultrie could enter his employ as a clerk, he argued, and grow up in the business.

Cheval thought the opening most propitious, and a load was lifted off his mind.

Where his young friend *could* go to escape the clutches of Quantrell, had been matter of much worry with him. Now the road was clear, and the quicker Moultrie would take it the better.

This he stated to him in terse, concise language, with considerable urgency, and it was decided that he should, that very evening, bring to Cheval's room

various articles of clothing, and certain books he desired to take along, which Cheval would pack in one of his own trunks, and on the following day they would take the midnight train, quietly, together, for St. Louis only, from which point, after transacting some business that called him there, Cheval would return to Cedar-Crest and Moultrie continue on to Colorado. This programme, it was thought, if kept secret, would throw Quantrell off the scent entirely, if anything could, and Moultrie would be safe beyond his reach before he would know of his departure. It was a common thing for the students in trouble, or seeking indulgences, to visit Cheval for advice. The question of funds for the journey agitated Moultrie more than the Professor imagined, and he, observing the boy's looks, inquired the cause and urged him to speak out candidly without reserve, saying this was no time for half confidences.

Encouraged by his instructor's kind earnestness, the young man suggested that perhaps his father had better be notified very early, so as to be sure and have the money he would require for expenses in hand in time, and yet, said he :

"If he disapproves the step, in his displeasure he may divulge the whole plan, by his actions, if not by his words, and then Quantrell will nab me sure and 'my goose will be cooked.'

"I am in great doubt how to proceed."

"We have not yet come to that, my dear boy," the professor interrupted quickly.

"Since you have broached the subject, however, we may as well consider it at once. I have asked you not to mince matters, and must of course also speak plainly and to the point myself."

"All that I have said and done, and will say and do in this connection, is entirely on my own responsibility. I have confided in no one, yet, I presume I could safely trust implicitly to a dozen or more of your friends I might mention. I propose, however,

in preference, to run the smallest minimum of risk necessary, and, therefore, would advise that you divulge to your father your proposed action and the reason for it, only at the very latest moment, and then in strict confidence and to him alone, say at bed time."

"I had proposed to loan you a part of my salary which I have saved—there is more than what is needed for the trip—if your father could not raise the money on the spur of the moment."

The professor looked off through the window toward the blank wall of the church, and talked more rapidly, as he observed the large tears welling up in Moultrie's eyes.

"Your mother is a sweet, good mother, but altogether too nervous," he added, "to be told until it is all over, and at least too late for her agitation to defeat us. How would it do for her to take the early train next morning and follow you as far as St. Louis? You could lie over there a day, you know, and bid her good-by at leisure."

Moultrie's heart was beating like a "trip-hammer."

Now, reader, if you do not know what a "trip-hammer" is, and how it beats, go to Webster's dictionary, or to some "trip-hammer" boss, to learn—the space cannot be here spared to explain.

"Muster all the dominoes of the secret societies to kick me!" Moultrie mentally ejaculated, as he realized how meanly and cruelly unjust he had been in his feelings toward that dear, good old president of the college, and this noble professor.

And he could hold out no longer. Here was this most excellent man, whom he had so grievously misjudged, piling coals of fire on his head by his great kindness.

All along, while he had supposed him a heartless Mentor, bent, in cold blood, on loading him with disgrace, he was plotting how to rescue him from a

baser fate, he had not even dreamed was threatening.

Pressing his handkerchief to his eyes with one hand, while he vainly tried to choke down the sobs his tumultuous feelings provoked, he clasped Cheval's hand in his other, and said—

"How shamefully I have wronged you in my thoughts up to this very hour!"

The hearty, responsive pressure spoke much more eloquently than words could, and for several moments the ticking of the old clock on the antique mantel, and the sobs of the young man were all that broke the prevailing stillness.

Very little, in fact, was said by either after this, aside from what was needed to settle on perfect concert of action, regarding final preparations for what was to prove the most memorable epoch in Moultrie De Kalb's life.

For, after leaving Cedar-Crest, his lines fell in strange places, and frequently he was environed by imminent danger, and more than a decade rolled by, freighted with many conspicuous events in the history of the world, and numerous adventures and vicissitudes, yet frequent successes, in his own life, before he again saw his native village.

And, he was numbered among those the populace call "great" when the hand of unerring time recorded that day.

But we must not anticipate, as Fatty Forbush, now at our elbow, and as rotund in his pile of shekels and a goodly bank credit as he is in jolly avoirdupois—as Fatty says, we must not be "too previous."

The village had grown to an incorporated city, and all the principal streets were paved and lined with handsome buildings, and thronged with many new and strange faces, when Moultrie finally did see it again.

All that had occurred since meeting Cheval dazed Moultrie. His thoughts, under this proposed start-

ling change, were bewildering. Now depressed, then buoyant. Misgiving and hope alternated.

He could conceive of no degradation equal to that of being locked up in the county jail, a prisoner. Escape he must, and he trembled when he feared he could not, notwithstanding the kind professor.

When, to evade Quantrell, he resolved on his midnight exit from Cedar-Crest, so secretly and so suddenly, his mind filled with a tempest of conflicting thoughts. And amaze, doubt, hope, fear, hesitancy, and anticipation battled for supremacy.

Amid this wild tumult, like the blazing splendor of a planet dominating its surrounding satellites, another feeling shone ascendant. It was love! Love for his Bertha! Yes, notwithstanding Cheval's injunction to go home and stay there, there was one person he could not bear the idea of leaving without a fond farewell.

He had not believed that such a wish could take such absorbing possession of him, until he was held in its thrall.

But now he *knew* one pair of beautiful gray eyes, that, peering through their long, dark lashes, looked like stars. One gentle voice and a certain soft little hand that, when he was fevered, felt so cool as it lay in his own. It dawned on him that he would be awfully lonely when he could not be where the tranquillity their presence always brought could be with him to assuage.

"I must and shall bid her good-bye!" he exclaimed aloud, and then he echoed, "good-bye!"

Oh! so dolefully, and started in terror at the sound of his own voice. Casting, involuntarily, at the same moment, a forlorn and most woe-begone glance at the professor, whose eyes for the moment, chanced to be engaged (of course, unintentionally) in another direction.

"Yes, perhaps it will be good-bye for good," Moultrie mutely added, despairingly.

And he began, in a feverish, absent-minded, rapid

and incoherent way, to fold every thing wrong, and pack his effects in a topsy-turvy, random way, without any semblance of neatness or system, in Cheval's trunk, a dismal expression seated on his handsome face.

He was in Druid Hall, in Cheval's bed-chamber, with doors securely locked and bolted to guard against intrusion.

Then the professor, looking up from the book he was reading, saw the tears glistening in the young man's eye, and noticed the hap-hazard, desperate way he was packing the trunk. He arose, took him by both arms, seated him in the nearest chair, and then removing every thing so untidily placed therein, leisurely repacked the trunk in proper order.

Moultrie was in vain trying to repress his sobs.

"I don't believe I'd hire you to drum for me," said Cheval, good-naturedly, ignoring his tears.

"You would not do for a commercial traveler. Here's a tack-hammer and a bottle of ink uncorked, reposing comfortably on your hand mirror with your white cambric handkerchiefs, and—holy Moses! what's this? Your blacking brush between two shirts!

"And here, in this compartment, are your hair brush and these cuffs and collars, and a bottle of mucilage, open!

"By the way, Moultrie," he added, quickly, "take this and go down to Osterhaus' store, and buy a couple of those blue flannel shirts we so admired the other day, a pair of those riding boots, those with the blue tops, you know, and one of those broad-brimmed, cowboy hats.

"You'll need them before long.

"Better wash your face before you go, it looks as red as a new-born babe's.

"Hurry now, my dear boy, and come straight back. Have the articles carefully wrapped."

And he handed him a banknote.

Moultrie obeyed mechanically. But his heart was

not in the work he was bent on. The whole business,—to quote his favorite expression—seemed like a dream. Quantrell's attitude did not surprise him, while, on the other hand, the professor's kindness actually dazed him.

There was no use trying, however, he could not make up his mind to obey Cheval's injunction to the letter, in the matter of strict secresy as to this momentous move in his young life.

He must, and would, see Bertha, he said over and over again to himself, even though he died for it.

Surely she would not say anything, nor, by look or act, betray him; and perhaps she would feel as sorry at his going away as he did.

He hoped so, anyhow.

Oh, yes!

How he did *hope* she would.

"And no one else would know anything about it," he added to himself, "*she* can keep a secret."

Not even his father and mother, until eleven o'clock at night, one hour only before his departure, for the professor had told him that he had met and quietly notified his father that at that time he would have a matter of great importance to communicate, and for him to expect him at his house, and be ready without fail to receive it, and under no circumstances, to make known the fact that he would call at that late hour—not even to Mrs. DeKalb—as any suspicion on the part of any one, especially Quantrell, might prove disastrous and lamentable in the extreme.

So what could be the harm thought Moultrie, if he called, ever so quietly and secretly, and said "good-bye to—to—to Bertha."

There could be none, he insisted, so his mind was made up upon that point.

Cheval had given Mr. De Kalb plainly to understand that, for the successful transaction of the important business he would have with him, only the seemingly unreasonable, at least unusual and un-

seasonable hour he had named, when the whole village would be wrapped in slumber—could be safely set.

He had, as he told Moultrie, carefully exacted a promise from the old gentleman to make no allusion whatever, in any shape, to any person, about the appointment, and had sent him off shaking his head and much mystified at the strange admonition.

So much so indeed, that he carried his air of wonder and perplexity into his quiet, unostentatious home, and made his wife very nervous by his occasional, half suppressed mutterings.

There had never been any reticence or deception between this simple, mutually confiding old couple heretofore, and the anxious interrogatories of the good mother, worried at the strange humor of her spouse, served only the more to bewilder him.

Woman-like, she plied her questions with increased fervor, and with exhortation and denunciation drove the old gentleman half daft.

Finally, his oft repeated reply to her increasingly persistent demands for a candid and full explanation of his unusual mood, elicited the odd reply :

"All in good time, my dear, but upon my soul I don't know what it is myself. But, all in good time, all in good time, you shall learn *all*, in good time."

At last the monotony of this unvarying declaration, multi-varying in accent and tone, accompanied, sometimes by assuring, sometimes by beseeching looks, settled an explanation in her mind.

"The old man is gone crazy !"

Then came a new phase.

She began eyeing him suspiciously.

All the horrible stories of violence done by mad men against their most dearly beloved loomed up like a frightful nightmare before her.

Her nervousness increased each moment, and she prepared to go to her brother's house, on the village outskirts, to bring him and two stout farm hands to hold the gentleman, in case his malady took a violent

turn. Delay was dangerous. She must go at once. But how?

She talked to him patronizingly now, like a mother coaxing an obdurate and willful child, that can be conquered only by sugar-plums and sweet speech, and meanwhile put on her bonnet and shawl, looking at him sideways and bobbing her head as much as to say "yes, it's right." In her fidgetiness she dropped her shawl pin, and, in stooping to pick it up, staggered like a drunken man. She grew very nervous and, although she smiled in a sickly manner, looked woful and scared.

And he, in his turn, imagined her nervousness had taken an exceedingly serious direction.

It had been a long time since she had spoken to him in that cooing way—*quite* a long time. And she looked as if afraid because she was doing it.

But never before had she accompanied such words and tones with preparations for flight.

"For the life of him," he could not understand it. "What *did* it mean? Had her recent sickness shattered her nerves, and produced temporary insanity?"

It was "away back yonder," long ago, the time when he folded her in his arms, affectionately, in response to her honeyed words, and ever and anon checked them with fervent kisses, that she had talked *that way.*

And all along he had been a sort of *avant courier* of those who held that husbands should have no secrets from their wives, always *first* and loudest to proclaim it whenever the question came up. He was steadfast and impregnable in this position, and all the wealth of Christendom could not have tempted him to join a secret society.

The idea was his religion, so deeply imbued and immovably rooted that he could not have become a club-man even to save his soul.

The closer he eyed "the partner of his bosom," the more her alarm increased, and the more she be-

came convinced that some subtle and sudden influence had made him insane.

Then she conjured up every possible and impossible cause she could conceive of for such a lamentable condition.

She thought of this thing, and that thing, and the other thing, but dismissed them all when, suddenly, her eyes became riveted on a photograph of Mrs. Poinsett and Bertha,—Bertha when a child of ten years—which hung over the mantel, and was a recent gift from that lady to Moultrie.

There was the solution! she instantly concluded, of her husband's deplorable condition.

When neighbors, that very morning, had turned up their noses at that picture, he had had a good word for it. When they had sneered, or railed at the originals, he had parried their vicious thrusts and sent them home "piping mad," because he would not, without protest, listen to their unchristain, ungenerous, and ofttimes senseless and grievously unjust comments. Now she knew what picture the remarks referred to.

She had almost invariably coincided with her visitors, and verbally, by nods, and other mute signs had encouraged them. And, furthermore, he had dared to exchange greetings with Mrs. Poinsett on the street, and even stop and talk to her pleasantly, although the husbands of other ladies had avoided, or at best, only coldly nodded to her, when crossing her path.

All this passed, rapidly, through her mind and seemed a satisfactory solution of the situation.

"Yes, *she* is the cause!" she said. "And he endorses her! Oh! how *could she* so get the upperhand of all of us!"

Yes, she is the "*cause*," and to think that he should have the imprudence to "stick up for her 'agin' us all," was crushing.

That he should have the audacity to espouse a "cause" she condemned, an audacity he had not

dared before, or had been sufficiently politic to control for so many years, astounded her.

It was an affront she had never before received from him, *no, never!* And it was too unendurable even to think of.

Others had differed with her, differed seriously, and broken friendships, or mutual coolness had resulted in several instances.

Even Moultrie and she had had bitter disputes, in which sneers and invective and ridicule had mingled; for both were quick tempered and liable to be indiscreetly provoked, and say things they afterwards regretted.

But never before had her husband opposed her, in anything, save by docile protestation, or mildly depreciating expostulation.

Yes, that woman, *a widow*, too, whom all her friends, and especially all the members of her sewing circle, had so unanimously condemned, she had done it all!

"He ain't a bit right!" she exclaimed dolefully, shaking her head disconsolately. "Not a bit right!" and then she eyed him askance, but by a supreme effort, wonderful for her, kept back the rising tears of pity and indignation, that wanted to well up and overflow from her aching heart.

"That pesky, sly widow Poinsett, with all her fine airs, has just gone and bewitched him; *so* she has."

And then, with a woman's tact, and a woman's wit and cunning, she resorted to a woman's strategy.

She looked at him lovingly, more lovingly than ever. And told him, in compassionate tones, that she "didn't think he was feeling well." She "was sure he wasn't, and she ought to go for a doctor." Then nervously hastened her preparations for departure.

"Where are you going?" he said, trembling from head to foot.

His agitation as he asked this question increased her alarm.

"It's a comin'! It's a comin'! Heaven help him!" she shrieked, and then rushed wildly through the door, colliding with Moultrie, just entering, and sending him head first off the verandah into a pretty flower plot, herself recoiling and falling backward into her husband's arms, as he fortunately issued at the moment, hastily, from the house, close at her heels.

"Please don't run away from me," he pleaded, piteously.

"There, there, there! Everything will come out all right. We will soon know what it all means."

Moultrie picked himself up, dazed and filled with the wildest apprehension. As he entered the house, he saw his good father with a frightened look standing over his mother, who was seated in her old-fashioned, high-backed rocker, her own particular chair, and his father was talking to her in a crooning accent Moultrie had never heard him talk before.

But good gracious! what was that strange headgear? Alas! The good man had essayed to dash some water into his wife's face to revive her, and the little cedar bucket had slipped from his nerveless grasp and landed, upside down, on her devoted head. And there it was. How cute looking. Fitting fully as snugly, if not quite as becomingly, as the dear old gentleman's Sunday high hat fitted his head. He was oblivious, however, of her comical appearance, and was saying, caressingly:

"Be quiet, dear, be quiet! No harm shall befall you."

More of this reassuring talk he reiterated repeatedly.

Moultrie tenderly removed the bucket and fixed a pillow for her head and back, and she looked, oh, so woful, limp and dazed. The water his father had dashed on her face had saturated her dress bosom, and deep lace collar, and taken all the starch out of them.

Her hair was drenched and disheveled, and hung

in a ludicrous way, all on one side, lending a crooked, awry look to her terrified face, usually so placid.

The incident created consternation among the spying neighbors. For more than one had witnessed the out-door event of the scene, and that Moultrie had run away from home, after his mother's wild assault on him, and from which she had been, with difficulty, dragged off, by a too indulgent father; later on, came to be, with all the village, the accepted explanation of his sudden disappearance at midnight, and his continued absence.

His parents were, meanwhile, all along in blissful ignorance of the existence of such an impression. And Cheval took no pains to correct it, deeming it better to let it pass, as, should Quantrell know the real reason of Moultrie's departure, he might concoct all kinds of annoyances for Mr. DeKalb, and make his continued sojourn in Cedar-Crest not "a bed of roses."

A little after nine o'clock P. M., Moultrie started out at a brisk walk, for Mrs. Poinsett's cottage.

Si Quantrell was lying in wait when the young man entered the gate opening into the pretty front yard.

The night was still, but not uncomfortably cool, and the windows of the cozy parlor were raised although the curtains were drawn closely.

Moultrie thought he had arranged quite secretly to make this visit, but his excited look while going there at an earlier hour to make the appointment, had been observed by the keen eyes of his arch enemy, Quantrell.

Mrs. Poinsett's colored servant, Dinah, who had been reared in their Southern home, and had been nurse for Bertha, when that young lady was an infant, was in ear-shot in an adjoining room, when young De Kalb had, earlier, announced his intended call, in a low voice, and after Bertha had said:

"Very well, I will tell Mamma."

Dinah's mind had filled with queer forbodings, as

she peered cautiously and saw Moultrie seize the young "Missis," hand in both his own and kiss it passionately, while he plead, in tremulous tones, for her to say nothing whatever about it to her mother nor anyone else, but meet him alone, alleging that the most important business of his life was the occasion of the visit, and great disaster would surely befall him if anyone knew anything about it.

Bertha was amazed at his earnestness.

"What the debbel dat mean," exclaimed Dinah, *sotto voce*, after retreating precipitately to the back porch.

"I dunno much, clar to goodness I don't, but I reckon dars' somefing in de ar not jes' right, when young dismessed uns from de college acts dat way. Can't pull de wool over dis chile though, jes' you make shuah ob dat!"

Now what dat Mister Maltese Scalb want dat time o'night wid my little missis?

Reckon he like to slope wid her, if he git de chance. Reckon he won't git it though.

"Wonder whar he spect he take her? Howsumever though he am good lookin' and highist tone, he ain't gwine to take her no whar 'less I go too.

"Poor little baby! what for she want to run away?

"Deed to goodness dis is a strange worl! dats de forf gal runned away wid a man dis year. When is dey gwine ter stop?

"I does hope she won't go. Deed I does!

"Poor little missis! she is a fool-like gal sure nuff, sometimes, anyhow. But dat's all right, isn't we all fools sometimes?

"But if she meet dat Mister Maltese Scalb—howsumever he may be—I says he maybe a gemman—I don't say he isn't—I don't say nuffin agin him.

"Bless me, Honey, I don't say nuffin agin nobody—

"But if she meet him dat time ob night, I will be

dar, too, a brack angel, hoberin' aroun' wid my wings to pertect her!

"Though I ain't got no wings, eigh! nor nuffin' to look like a angel wid—yah! yah!! yah!!!

"But you'll see me dar, yes, yo' will, shuah!"

And with this virtuous resolution uppermost in her mind, shortly after Moultrie left, the faithful servant and ex-slave sallied forth with a basket on her arm, directing her footsteps towards the business center of the town.

As ill luck would have it, Si Quantrell met her in a shady spot, a little way down the street.

Dinah was an excellent laundress.

All along, Mrs. Poinsett had allowed her to take in such work as she could manage, without neglect of her regular household duties.

And she was also an expert with the needle, and had launched somewhat extensively into fancy shirt-making for the students and dudes of the town, out of which she had already realized a snug little sum, which she had very discreetly laid aside.

"To go to housekeeping for myself," she had said, "when missis is gone to heben, or is done got tired ob de ole niggah."

"Good morning, Dinah," said Quantrell, in his most pleasant tone. "You look as neat as a picture, and you are the person I have been longing to see.

"I want some fine shirts made, and there is no one in town can make them as well as you, and if you will take the job and do it well, I'll pay you liberally and make you a nice present besides."

"I allus does my jobs well, Mr. Quantell," she replied, with a proud toss of her head.

"Yes, I know you do, Dinah, and that is why I have come to you with this one.

"If you have plenty of time to spare I want you to do it—provided Mrs. Poinsett has no objection.

"You must not let it interfere with your other work for her, you know."

"Lor' bless you! it ain't gwine to do dat. Missis lets me do all I gits to do, an' I doesn't undertake more'n I can get frough wid.

"When does yer want 'em?"

"Just as soon as the goods arrive from St. Louis. By the way, I will have the largest stock of dress-goods, when they do get here, that I ever carried, and the finest, too; you can take your pick.

"How are your mistress and the young lady?"

"Dey's all well, I thank'e."

"I see that young scapegrace, Moultrie De Kalb, is very attentive to Miss Bertha," he said, looking straight at her; then added with a disapproving shake of his head:

"She is too good a girl, Dinah, to be fooled with so by a grand rascal like him. You'd better keep on the lookout before it becomes too serious.

"Mrs. Poinsett don't like me, I know, one bit, but for all that, I wouldn't let a lone widow like she is come to harm if I could prevent it."

Dinah distended her eyes, opened her mouth, like a crater, as though in a great hurry to speak, and nodded approval.

"She ought to look out for herself," he continued. "He is disgraced, and not alone has he been kicked out of college, but, I can tell you, worse will come to him, and he will be sent to jail in a very few days.

"He will find he can't raise disgraceful rows, in the dead of night, and destroy property without being made an example of."

"Is yo' shuah dey'll put him in de jail?" she exclaimed in a protesting way.

For notwithstanding her misgivings she really liked De Kalb very much.

"Oh, there is no doubt of it!" he answered.

"The evidence against him is pretty nearly all ready and it will happen sooner than you or any one else looks for. He's a bad egg!

"Mrs. Poinsett better just ask him not to come

there any more, unless she wants to have it said about her that 'birds of a feather flock together,' and him a jail bird, don't you see?

Dinah did see.

And furthermore, the promise of a new dress had done much to win her. She thought it very kind of Si Quantrell to give the warning when he must know how "onery" they all considered him at the college as well as at the cottage.

Surely, she thought, he must be aware of how thoroughly he was despised by mother and daughter.

"You is a true friend, shuah!" she cxclaimed emphatically.

"He's comin' dar to-night an' is goin' to see de young missus alone, I heard him ax her.

"I'll jes' watch fo' de land—I will, Mr. Quantel!"

"Coming to see her alone—Miss Bertha—and to-night, eh!" he exclaimed, with a strange look.

"He's getting along right pert with the foolish—I mean thoughtless and innocent young lady."

"Foolish am de name!" interrupted Dinah with spirit. "Foolish am de name, Mr. Quantel, and so am innocent—innocent am de name, too!

"Dat gal am de innercentest and foolisherest gal I eber seed! but I'ze dar, and Mr. Maltese Scalb better not go fer to try any pranks wid her.

"I tole yo' so I does, an' I'ze talkin' I is!"

Dinah's looks and gestures were full of unmistakable earnestness. The very idea of her young mistress being in the slightest peril made her bustle, and Quantrell's words had caused her to put her war paint on, and put it on thick. For she believed all he said.

And he knew how to follow the matter up and, by imposing several empty flatteries which were accepted in full faith, won her completely over to his views and pumped her dry.

Their conversation, all together, had lasted only fifteen minutes, and when they separated he had re-

ceived her promise not to repeat it nor allude to the subject, not even to Mrs. Poinsett nor Bertha.

She wondered at his desire for such profound secresy but asked for no reason.

Eespecially was she enjoined to watch over Bertha in her intercourse with Moultrie, and report to him from time to time what passed.

The two parted with a very exalted opinion on Dinah's part of Quantrell's good qualities and a firm conviction that he was indeed a sincere friend of the Poinsett family, after all, herself included, no matter what any body else might think or say to the contrary, and notwithstanding Mrs. Poinsett heartily disliked him.

CHAPTER VI.

MOULTRIE IS RESCUED FROM QUANTRELL.

DURING that afternoon Fatty Forbush, accompanied by a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular student, whose sobriquet in the college halls was "Hercules," called three times for Moultrie at his father's house, and scoured the village in every direction, calling at every probable haunt of his, in vain search for him.

He was nowhere to be found. Had they thought to call at Professor Cheval's rooms they would have surprised him in the midst of his preparations for stealthy flight. But there was the last place they would be likely to look for him.

They then, in a fit of mingled desperation and disgust, left a note at his home and another in his box in the post-office, urging that he meet them, without a moment's delay, on important business of pressing moment to himself in particular, and designating a rendezvous.

Meanwhile Moultrie was in Druid Hall, as the reader knows, secretly preparing for his clandestine departure.

That he would receive one or both of the notes and be on hand, promptly, at the appointed place, both Forbush and Hercules did not for an instant doubt.

They were there and, after several hours of impatient waiting, Fatty walked again to Moultrie's house, while Hercules remained at the rendezvous to be on hand if he came.

Judge of Fatty's surprise when, in a mystified and nervous manner entirely unlike himself, Moultrie's father said his son was not there, and had not been for hours, and he could not imagine where he could be.

"The note was still at the house and would be placed in his hands immediately on his return," he added.

Moultrie had never before been hard to find, and therefore more non-plussed than ever, "Fatty" rejoined "Hercules" and both repaired to the post-office, to find that the other note was gone.

Moultrie, much agitated, but with a fruitless attempt to appear as unconcerned as usual, had taken it from his box, on his way to Osterhaus' store, which was next door, and had forgotten to open and read it, but had carelessly thrust it into his coat pocket, never learning its character until several hours after the time was passed up to which Fatty and Hercules had written they would wait for him. Of course it was then too late to comply with their wishes, and furthermore, Moultrie was so engrossed in his preparations for flight that he did not consider he could hazard any time to anything else.

He therefore let any effort he might have put forth to make amends, by repairing to the rendezvous even too late, go by default, and again thrusting the note into his coat pocket, gave the subject no further attention or thought.

To make matters worse, during the hurried tea hour his father entirely forgot the *other* note, and this evidence of the double earnestness of his friends, Moultrie was not permitted to weigh.

Had it been otherwise, his subsequent course of action would have been changed. So at least he believed, when, later on, he came suddenly to understand the full meaning of the situation, and the desire and design of Fatty, Hercules and their confederates.

On the eventful evening in question, he called on Bertha, as per appointment, at half-past nine o'clock.

She sat waiting and mystified, on a little chair in the cozy recess of their pretty bay window, that looked out from the east side of the parlor, toward the center of the town.

Cedar-Crest had, as I have intimated heretofore, a public square.

Most small towns have.

Around its four sides were grouped its principal business marts, and the four streets they were on, in their continuations, constituted the principal residence thoroughfares of the place.

West street on which the Poinsett cottage stood, about four blocks from the square, rose gradually as it receded from that small mercantile center, until reaching the cottage, from whence it stretched on for half a mile over a level plain to where it ended at the turnpike that connected two other towns to the right and left of Cedar-Crest, respectively.

It was, therefore, one of the principal highways for farmers coming to market.

Back of and parallel with it ran the railroad, the high embankment of which, along the south front of Cedar-Crest, from the west side eastward to a point nearly reaching the Poinsett cottage, looked like the outer face of a huge earth rampart, such as loomed up all around Vicksburg, and Atlanta, and Yorktown and Richmond, and other cities, when they were besieged, during the war of the Rebellion.

A person walking upon this embankment during the night, unless the sky was completely shut out from view by storm-pent clouds, could be distinctly discerned in the starlight, and, standing out in such bold relief, was not hard of identification, especially if addicted to any idiosyncrasy of gait or posture, or in any way peculiar in figure.

Moultrie lived in the southeast corner of the town, and in going to Mrs. Poinsett's, to save distance took this embankment. A bounding motion that marked his gait when he walked fast made him conspicuous, and frequently his friends had said they could distinguish him as far as they could see, "if he was going in a hurry."

He *was* going in a hurry that night, and Si Quantrell, from the steps of his store, descried him against the rich blue sky, thickly studded with shimmering stars.

"Aha! my precious lad!" he muttered with a sardonic smile;

"I know your little game! You're nearly to the end of your rope, and you'll reach it soon, with a sudden back-pull. Sooner, much sooner than you expect!

"What will you do then?"

"Aha! I'll be even with you, when that happens, and the old man, and the old woman too. The young fool hasn't had sense enough to know that that is the very worst road he could take, if he wanted to deceive anyone as to where he was going."

Seeing a group of men standing a few steps below, he approached, with a mean expression on his face, and said, in a very innocent manner.

"Boys who can that be walking on the embankment at this hour of night?

"Some self important student, I'll bet five dollars, up to some mean trick, as usual."

"Well I know who it is," spoke one of the men," (the group were all town rowdies)—"I can tell him from a thousand! He's that young pup De Kalb!"

"That's so! That's him, that's *him!*" echoed the others.

"I believe you are right!" exclaimed Quantrell, after a pretended closer scrutiny: "I tell you what it is, boys, this town has stood enough from those young dogs, and I'd give something worth having, if I could catch one of 'em. That fellow over there is up to some devilment, you can bet your boots! He's either going to smash someone's property, or he is plotting something with some silly, simpering fool of a girl."

Then, turning to a big, brawny glazier, who obtained but little work, because he was constantly more or less intoxicated, he continued.

"What d'ye say, Scotty, if we follow and catch him in the act?"

"No thank'ee, Mr. Quantrell—"the glazier replied —"I don't feel like follerin' anyone to-night 'cept it be bed, I was a just a thinkin' of goin' home when you kem up.

"The more glass them fellers shivers the better it is fur me ye know. Howsomever, I does feel sorry fur you'ns what has the glass shivered."

Luke Hindman, a much smaller man, volunteered to go with Quantrell, if he would "call it a job to be paid light if nuthin' come of it and handsome if they caged the bird." He knew Quantrell hated Moultrie.

A private conference between the two ensued, an agreement was made, and Quantrell handing Scotty fifty cents, "to set up the drinks," enjoined secrecy (which was promised) and, himself going hurriedly out West street, sent Hindman up the embankment with instructions to meet him in the vacant lot just beyond Widow Poinsett's house.

"I say Si'," said Scotty, overtaking him, and assuming an air of equality not exhibited in the presence of the others.

"Call it a dollar, so the boys can get more'n a taste, I'll make it up sometime."

Quantrell hesitated a moment, then, evidently believing it the best he could do, hastily took back the half and gave Scotty a whole dollar. They then separated, Scotty and his party going to a saloon in the German quarter.

Moultrie DeKalb hastened out the embankment, and climbing a fence hurried across the vacant ground just beyond the Poinsett cottage, emerging on West street. Down this he turned, until the front gate was reached, through which he entered, after a glance around that seemed to convince him no one was lurking about.

Reaching the front door he lightly rapped, and it was almost immediately opened by Bertha.

A gentle squeeze of the soft little hand, and Moultrie entered, the fine wondering eyes of the graceful girl looking into his agitated and expressive face, as if to read thereon the meaning of his excitement.

"Well! Sir Knight, are you suddenly attacked with an overweening desire for adventure, that you must make such an unusual engagement, or what is the matter with you?" she remarked, half laughingly, half seriously, as she resumed her seat, and pointed to another for him.

"I have but a few moments in which to tell you," he began nervously, pushing his chair toward her, "and you will be greatly surprised. I have confided in you, Bertha, more than in anyone else in the world in coming here, much more!" he emphasized.

She gave a little nervous twitch, and pushed her chair back slightly.

"And now I am going away, I don't know for how long," he added desperately.

"Going away!" she exclaimed, in a voice that sounded like an outcry.

"Yes, going away," he repeated, dejectedly. "I have known it myself but a very little while."

And then he told her everything, detailing in full the kind offices of the friend, "a Nature's nobleman," he said, who had enlightened him on all the

points he had just related to her. One little item in the whole business, this good friend's name, he must keep a sacred secret, even from her," he added.

"*Little* item!" she interjected, laying her hand on his arm. "Why, Moultrie, such a friend as that is the biggest item in the world! Too big to be called an item!"

"I agree with you, Bertha, heartily," he replied.

"I only meant that in all the history of this unfortunate affair, which is going to take me so far away from—from—from Cedar-Crest and—and my mother and father, whom I may not see again for years: in all the words it has taken to tell what has led to this those that would pronounce his name are a small item, that's what I mean, Bertha." He longed to add, "darling," but had not the courage.

He hardly knew himself what he did mean.

It was a clear case of, "thou art so near and yet so far." After he was on the cars, rushing westward, how he wished he *had* said darling.

His heart ached at the mere thought of leaving her, and he wanted to, but could not, dare not, tell her so.

"Gracious goodness! but you *have* taken me by surprise!" she suddenly exclaimed, intensely.

"So you are going away off to Colorado! So far, and so unexpectedly, what will people think?"

"People may think what they please, but they will know nothing except that I am gone," was his quick interruption, defiantly.

"I told you, you remember, that even my parents will know nothing of it, that is, from me.

"The pro—— I mean (confusedly) the kind friend who has saved me from real disgrace will tell them, after I am a safe distance away, and they will follow, or at least mother will, and overtake me at St. Louis, "where I will await their coming."

"You really think you are doing the very best by going, do you, Moultrie?" she asked in a strained, choking tone, not looking at him, her little hands

clasped on her lap, her shoulders drooping, and pain plainly visible in her sweet face.

"The very best," he replied, in a low, concentrated voice, looking wistfully at her. Then, in a louder tone:

"I have thought it all over, thought of how I might get out of going, and a million ideas, it seemed to me, came trooping through my mind; but there was nothing else, no other course suggested half as promising, none with any promise of escape, whatever, in fact, presented itself. So I must say good-bye, *now*," he added, looking at his watch. "You'll think of me when I am gone and answer my letters, won't you, Bertha?" pleadingly. "I shall write to you often."

She put her hand in his, and did not step back when he moved a little nearer, and bending forward looked into her down-turned face.

She merely trembled a little, just a little, that was all, and her eyes grew misty.

"Bertha!" he cried, with passionate vehemence, impulsively drawing her close to him with sudden emotion, and throwing his arms about her graceful figure, while he showered rapid and hot kisses on her hair, her eyes, and her lips.

"I cannot go if you wont promise me this! I did not know how hard it would be to put such a long distance, for such a long and uncertain time, between us! I did not know how sincerely I loved you, until I came to realize I would have no little Bertha to meet and talk with almost every day, as I have met and talked with you!"

She placed her hands on his—clasped behind her—and trembling from head to feet, made a poor, weak, little effort to unfold his arms entwined about her, but, as he resisted, she gave it up in a helpless, yielding way.

Again he bent down and warmly kissed her parted lips.

"We are too young, Moultrie, to talk of love, you and I," she protested.

"I am sorry you are going, and I *will* answer your letters, for I do like you very much, and if I can keep you out of mischief," she looked up with a little smile, "by my letters, as I have sometimes by my talk, I will be happier—happier!" she repeated with a quick, rich blush at his interpretation of her meaning; and then quickly added:

"Because I will have done *some good*, checked a friend from thoughtlessly and needlessly inflicting some one with some unintentional harm."

There were tears in her eyes now, as she looked up. Then, with sudden change of tone, "Now, let me go, Moultrie! This is too much! See what a sermon you have made me preach!"

"You must sit down at once!" and she made another fruitless but more determined endeavor to free herself.

"Give me one sweet kiss!" he cried. "Just one, Bertha, of your own free will, to show, you know, that you really are sorry I am going!"

But she flashed back.

"Not I!"

And grew real angry as she tugged at his arms in vain efforts to release herself.

"For shame!" she exclaimed. "Let me go! I should think you had had enough!"

But he had not had one hundredth part enough.

Looking at her reproachfully,

With a deep sigh, he untwined his arms and resignedly seated himself.

Her eyes were directed toward the curtained window. Her attitude was that of one listening.

Suddenly, with a look of supreme terror, she gave a little cry, and shook as if stricken with a chill.

Leaning forward, with eyes distended, her gaze became riveted, like one spell-bound with horror, on the curtains that seemed gently swaying in the breeze.

"What is it?" questioned Moultrie in alarm, springing instantly to his feet, and startled almost out of his senses at her deathlike paleness and the wild look in her eyes.

"There!" she gasped, faintly, pointing toward the window. "S-o-m-e—o-n-e!" She had seen a human hand.

The "some one" was, in tone, sepulchral.

DeKalb's hair rose on end, in perfect cadence with the enunciation of each long drawn out letter.

Bertha could have coined ducats innumerable had she been able, in any histrionic rôle, to reproduce before critical and appreciative audiences the same tone, pose and expression.

But she was no actress, in any sense.

Had she been, with her part of that fear-inspiring situation represented, she could have electrified the world, completely overshadowing all the great stage celebrities of the day by her transcendent genius.

She could not *act*, however, and Moultrie knew the explanation of her agitation was something substantial, real.

He was no coward, and quickly recovering from his sudden shock, he hastened to the window, Bertha following, all her recent rosy blushes supplanted by a blanched, whitened face, and the just before mild, sweet eyes, glaring wildly with inquiry and terror.

"It's me, honey!" Dinah exclaimed, as Moultrie flung aside the curtains. "Doan you got skeered, now!

"Dar was someone heah, right heah, under de winder, missus. He run'd away whin I cum roun' de house connah, jes dis momen."

"Who could it have been?" said Moultrie, in very manifest alarm.

"Oh! Heaven only knows!" ejaculated Bertha.

"How I do wish you had not come!" then, apologetically, and in a softer tone, "you could have written, you know, Moultrie," and with a look of

inexpressible despair and shame she wept disconsolately.

"I will stay!" he said, resolutely.

"The miserable sneak that was just now hiding here, shall not say I ran away from him! I will stay and settle with the cowardly sneak for this!"

Then turning to Dinah, who stood leaning in at the open window, her face a comical picture of wonderment, he said:

"You know, Dinah, that Miss Bertha cannot do anything she would be ashamed of!"

"Bress you, Massa Maltese, she am a angel, she am!

"I'ze been heah all the bressed ebenin an' I'ze heyard all your nonsense, an' it's all right."

There is no telling how long she would have gone on in this vein, had she not been interrupted by Bertha, over whose expressive face came another and a different look of alarm.

"You *must not* stay, Moultrie!" she cried. "If you really care for me, you will go. For Heaven sake, do not fail! Go! Oh Go, Go, Go!"

They were now, for a moment, interrupted by the shrill whistle of a locomotive that was signaling the approach of a train with that fantastic series of distressful sounds that so frequently happen when the pipes are obstructed.

Bertha's face grew a trifle paler. Moultrie looked at his watch mechanically.

"That is a freight engine," he said.

"How long before the passenger train?" she asked.

"Half an hour," he answered.

Dinah ventured to say:

"I reckon dat wasn't no 'spectable pussen at de winder; dar's tramps aroun' all de time. Dey'll cotch it if dey try to steal anything heah!"

"Then hurry to the depot, Moultrie!" said Bertha, not heeding Dinah's remark.

Moultrie, however, *had* heeded it, and like a

drowning man catching at a straw, he accepted it as Dinah divined he would.

"If it should turn out otherwise and anything should happen, will you make her write to me, so I can come straight back, Dinah?" he asked, entreatingly.

"To be sure, Massa Maltese, I will," she answered.

"Very well," he said. "Then I will first look over the premises outside thoroughly, and afterward go to the depot."

And, with a few hasty, spasmodic incoherencies, as he tried to brave the situation heroically, he walked the room with a most desperate and ineffectual attempt at coolness and unconcern.

Finally, gathering himself with all his strength in a futile attempt to smile assuringly, he seized Bertha's trembling hand, and held it a moment in his own. He dare not ask her to kiss him, while Dinah's big eyes were looking on, then waved a good-bye to the faithful negress, and hurried away.

Going by the route he had come, he was soon on the railroad embankment walking rapidly.

Cheval was already at the depot, having stated the situation fully to Mr. De Kalb and his wife.

Mrs. De Kalb declared she would order "the young scamp back home," and if he didn't return she would go on to his Uncle's, her brother's, with him.

The professor, standing on the lonely platform of the depot, thought he heard an altercation up the track, but could not, at first, distinguish the voices.

He listened attentively, and satisfied he was not mistaken, walked in that direction. As he neared the parties he distinctly heard Si Quantrell protesting himself a magistrate, and expounding on the majesty of the law and the awful crime of resistance to its officers, and then, clear in the night air (in answer to something indistinct said by an unknown voice), rang from Moultrie the words:

"Don't touch me with your foul hands! Mr. Quantrell has hold of me and that is enough!"

"Quantrell has hold of Moultrie? impossible!" thought the professor, and yet surely his senses could not so deceive him. He looked at his watch and saw by its illuminated face that the train would arrive or rather depart in just fifteen minutes.

The talk of the disputants was now distinct and undoubted and they were approaching.

The professor's blood began to boil, and he hastened his footsteps.

Cetainly Moultrie and himself would be enough for Quantrell and his companion whomever he was.

Just then he heard a low outcry, and an oath from Quantrell, and it was very evident a scuffle was going on. He quickened his pace, and soon saw dintinctly seven human figures, two or three of whom seemed to be gagging and binding another, and one was hurrying down the grade toward him.

A close look disclosed it to be Moultrie, hatless. Cheval stopped him, and in a quick spoken, brief explanation, the young man told how he had been to the Poinsett cottage, how he had told all to Miss Bertha, how they had been frightened by the noise at the window and how, while hurrying down the R. R. track he had been waylaid and seized by Quantrell and Hindman, whom he at first supposed to be tramps, and how Quantrell had arrested him for alleged trespass, but had shown no warrant.

He had intended to come along quietly to the depot, he said, where he believed Quantrell would have to release him.

Suddenly they were surrounded by masked men in costume, and he heard the challenge adopted by his college society, during and since the recent troubles, and to which he had promptly responded, where upon Hindman was knocked down (as he showed fight), and Quantrell was seized, bound and gagged.

Just at this moment a masked person overtook them, spoke some words in Latin to which Moultrie

made a reply, upon which he was handed his hat, and the other party turned and ran back.

It was Hercules in disguise. Grand, big Hercules!

Cheval and Moultrie reached the depot just as the train arrived and got away without any further trouble.

As the cars passed the Poinsett's, Bertha stood at the window of her bed chamber with a lamp in one hand, while she waved her handkerchief, or rather a huge towel, with the other. Further on, to the other side of the railroad, in a clump of forest trees, bordering the plain and lying east of Cedar-Crest, a bright fire was blazing, around which were grouped twenty or more grotesquely attired masqueraders.

Moultrie now understood it all, he thought. Notwithstanding the safeguards thrown around so carefully, his proposed flight had been discovered he knew—as well by his college secret society friends as by Quantrell, and the danger that had threatened its defeat at the hands of the latter had been most successfully parried by the former.

His succorers had been his late fellow-students, who had adjourned to this spot and lighted this fire, for some further reason, the purport of which he knew not.

The next day when Mrs. De Kalb heard of this adventure, she fully realized that Moultrie's departure was for the best, and not a moment too soon.

Henry the Fifth of England as "Prince Hal," was a very *wild boy* for so good a *King afterwards*.

Moultrie De Kalb, the prankish and disgraced Cedar-Crest student, developed, in Colorado and throughout the southwest and northwest, into a very wealthy, remarkably successful and eminently honorable business man. The friction encountered there and the opportunities for a free exercise of his latent and marked talent for active mercantile life, asserted itself to a most marked degree, and devel-

oped marvelously, and everything he touched seemed to turn to gold.

He amassed fortune upon fortune, and paved the way to financial independence for relatives and friends.

CHAPTER VII.

QUANTRELL FOILED.—IN THE HANDS OF THE "MYSTIC CREW."

FATTY FORBUSH and his bosom friend Hercules—pronounce "bosom" with a long drawn out lingering on the "o" of the first syllable, as, for instance, *bo-o-o-som*, and you have Fatty's pronunciation of the word. Fatty and Hercules occupied adjoining rooms on the second floor of the large, rambling frame house, from whence the whip-poor-will calls, mentioned heretofore, had issued.

A narrow strip of sward aligned the sidewalk on both sides, in front, and rising from this, furnishing delightful umbrageous comfort when old Sol was fiery, for Fatty's room, was a stately elm born before the footprints of the first white man had left their impress near the spot.

It was known, far and wide, by the college alumni of many successive commencement affairs and, by each and all was respected as the grandest old sylvan patriarch ever associated with anything like "wild and woolly West" scholastics.

Once a year it was garlanded with wreaths gathered from surrounding less significant forest monarchs of its kin. It seemed more rugged and stalwart now, in its ripe old age, than many a would-be-peer of younger and juicier growth.

In its thick foliage Fatty could, and did, watch the many and various feathered songsters that, now and

anon, peopled its branches, among which they builded their nests and reared their young, and warbled sweet carols.

But woe unto such as were scansorial, and came with their pecking proclivities to bore for food beneath its sacred epidermis.

Fatty did not know they were a blessing instead of a curse, and death only to destroying insects.

A smooth-bore pistol, of indefinite calibre, had been metamorphosed, years before, from a hors du combat shotgun (burst in the barrel midway between the breech and muzzle) into an available instrument of retribution against those supposed beautiful pests, whenever they attempted such sacrilege.

A convenient gunsmith had sawed off all but a foot of the barrel, and had trimmed down the stock, ironing it heavily to counteract recoil.

Frequent firing with fine bird shot at these woodpeckers, had made Fatty quite expert in this, to him, very entertaining species of guardianship, and throughout all the neighborhood he was the acknowledged custodian of the ancient and honored elm.

At that season of the year it was impossible to see through the thick foliage beneath his window, and identify any one on the sidewalk below, and, to a passer-by, looking upward, this window was equally indiscernible.

For many years the various occupants of this room had trimmed and trimmed the outpsreading boughs of the tree, to bring about this result.

At the moment Si Quantrell met Dinah on this very spot, on the sidewalk under the old elm, Fatty, with pistol in hand, was peering into its leafy branches, in search of an industriously offending, but very wary, offender.

Although, because of the rustling of the leaves in the breeze, some words were lost, enough of the conversation was overheard for the quick-witted

listener to fully comprehend its import. And after it was finished, and the parties had moved away, Fatty ran into Hercules' room, and broke up the study of his Greek by announcing it succinctly to him and a visiting classmate.

The trio thereupon resolved to place Moultrie beyond Quantrell's power to injure him.

Besides warning him personally, it was arranged that, at a meeting of the secret society called for that very night, and to which they all belonged, an appeal should be made in his behalf for concerted action on the part of every secret society member, to protect him against Quantrell's proposed persecution, and looking to his humiliation in retaliation, should he persist in his endeavors to disgrace him.

What plan was settled upon and carried out, will be developed further on in these pages.

At the meeting of the society that evening, at "Buzzard Roost," "at the hour the hen sleeps," a lively interest in the young man was manifested, and watchers were at once ordered, with messenger aides-de-camp accompanying, to report the movements during the evening of Si Quantrell and Moultrie, and a "committee of scribes" drafted a pledge which they proposed to compel Quantrell to sign, and the "knights of ceremonial fire," and the "janitors-yeomen," hurried with lucifer tapers, to the "bosky rendezvous."

Nearly all the society had gathered at this rendezvous, close to the village burial-ground and near the railroad, as the train bearing Cheval and Moultrie sped past.

It had hardly disappeared in the distance, when Quantrell's captors arrived, silently leading him into the midst of "the mystic masks."

"Order! Order!" in deep base tones broke the midnight stillness, and the hum of voices was immediately hushed as the exceedingly comical looking masqueraders seated themselves, crosslegged, on the turf.

Each costume was a caricature of some person or idea salient in history or poetry, and it was manifest that older heads than many of those screened by the typical masks worn had had a hand in devising them.

After a prelude of meaningless ceremonial, the same bass voice that had at first evoked so much respect, said imperatively,—

"Bring forth the Culprit!"

And Quantrell was pulled forward, near the fire, while the whole party arose and surrounded him, making odd guttural sounds.

His eyes flashed with indignation, and he looked searchingly at each domino, in a vain endeavor to pierce the disguise and identify the face beneath.

The gag in his mouth prevented utterance of the profuse profane explosions that were in his mind.

The bass voice again commanded order, and the maskers seated themselves, crosslegged, around the now waning fire.

Perfect quiet being restored, the anathema was read, in which, in the name of "the bird of the midnight vigils," dire trouble was threatened all who persecuted, or aided and abetted in the persecution or prosecution of anyone connected with the recent charivari.

Si Quantrell was then solemnly warned, at his peril, to do no harm whatever to any collegian.

A tin-trumpet and a cow-bell then gave audible evidence of their presence, and a dozen flaming brands in the hands of as many hideously looking dominoes, who flourished them wildly and danced in a circle around the prisoner, appeared.

The bass voice again restored quiet and rattled off a jumble of three or four Latin lines, having neither sense nor rhythm in them, but which were responded to by low groans and the renewed violent ringing of cow-bells and hand-bells, and the blowing of horns and whistles.

This senseless rigmarole over, the pledge for Quan-

trell's signature was read to him in a slow, tragic voice, and he was told that to have their sympathy within the meaning of their code, was to have their surveillance over his property during any celebration commanded by the Owl, with a view to its protection from injury by any malicious Vandals who participated in their fêtes and orgies, uninvited, and took advantage, under cover of them, to wreak their spite by defacing or destroying the possessions of those citizens they had ill will toward.

He was then asked, amid a flourish of pompous words, if he would sign the pledge and accept his immediate freedom, or refuse to sign and be left in the woods, tied to a tree, until some passer-by released him.

Quantrell had a vivid imagination on the subject of supernatural apparitions, and the village cemetery was less than two hundred yards away, its white tomb-stones looming up, like motionless spectres, in the silent night.

To be left alone with these and the dead they commemorated as his only near neighbors, until day, was too much.

He was a coward, and trembled at the thought.

He imagined himself thus situated and environed by a legion of ghastly and grinning skeletons with chattering jaws jibbering away at him, and fleshless phalanges twining in mock handshakings around his own fat fingers.

"Yes," he would sign, he would sign the pledge and do anything, provided he could get away from that dread-inspiring spot simultaneously with them.

The chief scribe came forward, wearing a three feet high funnel-shaped white cap emblazoned with various hieroglyphics, and having the head and neck of a jackass in tin, painted blue, dangling from its apex by a small brass chain.

Around his neck was a long yellow band fringed at the ends heavily, to which was fastened a broad

board, with a scarlet covering, suspended horizontally in front of his breast.

On this lay, out-spread, the manuscript Quantrell was required to sign.

The scribe approached with measured tread, while two masks released Quantrell's right arm, and another came forward with an inkstand and pen, whereupon the paper was duly signed.

They then proceeded to the master of ceremonies, who chanted the Latin prepositions, in verse, loftily, and received the manuscript, after which, in a deeper and more solemn bass voice than heretofore, while he extended his hands impressively upward, as if pronouncing a benediction, he said in measured tones :

" Let the racket begin !"

Then there broke forth a perfect bedlam of noises from trumpets, whistles, cow-bells, triangles, and other instruments, that made the welkin ring, and the party scattered, each student going to his own room quickly, all but four who detained Quantrell until the others had a good start that would enable them to reach home before he could spy out where they went, if he felt so disposed.

Conducting him slowly to the railroad embankment, a little below the Poinsett cottage, these four unbound his hands, and ordered him to pass on and himself remove the gag from his mouth, producing pistols at the same time, and warning him not to dog their footsteps on pain of serious penalty. But he was only too glad to get away and hurried to his own home, swearing " a blue streak " all the way.

CHAPTER VIII.

MOULTRIE A RANCHMAN AND MERCHANT IN COLORADO.

"YOU can let me have twenty-five pounds of that coffee and three hundred of the bacon," said a muscular looking, tall individual in buckskin pantaloons and wearing a large Mexican sombrero.

"I reckon I'll take fifty of them beans, too."

"There are eighty pounds to the sack," replied Moultrie De Kalb, standing behind a long, rambling counter.

"Well, say a sack then," responded Mr. Chamberlain.

"And make it four hundred of bacon instead of three. We may run agin high water and have to go into camp somewhere, and game is scarce on the upper road just now anyhow."

Moultrie was the picture of an active young business man, as he stood there, in his shirt sleeves, with a pen behind his ear, and hurriedly entered this order of the overland freighter on his blotter.

It was now late in the spring succeeding the September midnight when he made his eventful and precipitate exit from Cedar-Crest. He had, under his uncle, rapidly developed superior business tact, and had been, until recently, in charge of the joint hotel and store at the mines, twenty-five miles further up Centipede Canyon.

He had had his mother with him all through the preceding severe winter, she having decided to accompany him to Colorado when he came, and having subsequently found a return trip, before warm weather set in again, promising too much of hardship and danger; and her husband had finally concluded to sell out and move West himself, induced by the golden assurance shadowed forth in his son's

wonderful success, and the very flattering predictions from that young man, his mother and Moultrie's sanguine and successful uncle.

Mr. DeKalb was a miller of moderate means. and a certain point in Centipede Canyon, Southern Colorado, possessed all the water-power and other requisites for a most desirable mill-site.

It also lay within twelve miles of the one-and-twenty of the other great trails running east and west through that section.

A flour-mill and a sheep-ranch he had finally decided on as his intended ventures, with a store and bridge at the gorge crossed by the more distant of the two roads. He had, at first, very urgently suggested a freighting outfit, but was discouraged by both his son and brother-in-law, who correctly prophesied that railroads would soon supersede tedious ox-trains, and, furthermore, the danger from Indians —for the brief period that they might prove profitable—was a very serious objection.

When Moultrie had been with his uncle only a month, the latter had taken him on horseback over a section of mountain and valley land in the neighborhood of the mines, and, pointing out valuable features that would assert their worth when the country later on thronged with settlers, he had spoken of other localities possessing corresponding, and, in some instances, even greater points of value, and had finally said:

"Now, my boy, I shall turn over to you five to eight thousand acres of this, on equal shares, the surveys of which you must go over and prove. I shall also authorize you to make a description of contiguous lands, with a view to their future purchase, should we, on consultation, conclude to do so. You must discover carefully the full resources of all this acreage as nearly as you can, and estimate the probable cost of their development and the probable return for such outlay.

"I have perfect confidence in your ability to do

so. Consider these matters closely and well, and talk them up generally, in their respective drifts, with all the well informed men hereabouts, and see what you can do."

Moultrie did see what he could, and worked industriously and with a vim, until threatening snow-drifts and intensely cold weather warned him to desist.

Meanwhile, his success in the management of the hotel and store was excellent. He showed himself superior as a caterer even, and the books and accounts, that had been somewhat loosely kept before, were now models of precision and neatness.

He had a marked aptitude for business.

In book-keeping at school he had always been "to the fore," and in his practical application of its rules in connection with his uncle's affairs he was the same.

He prepared weekly abstracts on sheets of foolscap, agreeing exactly with his book-statements,which, posted up over his desk, served for his uncle as a sort of business-map—like a topographic chart—giving a bird's-eye view of his varied transactions at a glance.

It was a new idea in that section, and was a clear cut and complete exhibit of how each and every one of all the irons he had in the fire were working.

Towns, in the far West, sprang up like mushrooms in those days. Fortunes were made and lost in a jiffy, and men of business ability were recognized, and raised to the highest pinnacle of trust and success in the same rapid manner. And the supply was entirely inadequate to the demand. What the poor, sweltering, competent, metropolitan accountants missed.

Now, at the time we find Moultrie, on this beautiful May day, selling a small bill of goods to a small overland freighter, he is in charge for a few hours of his *own* store, thirty miles south of the Mines Hotel and town, on the great trail that passes only

twelve miles below the fine water-power he had pre-empted for his father's prospective mill.

Let us look at this store.

It is constructed like nearly all other buildings throughout that region of country. It is a Mexican *hackell.*

The logs forming the walls were set upright in a parallelogram trench, and then a horizontal log was laid along their tops and pinned to each by strong, tough mesquit, or osage-orange, wooden pegs driven into auger-holes bored through the horizontal into the top of each perpendicular log. The walls were about nine feet high, with the "cap log."

They extended along the front face about fifty feet. The rear wall of the front section was about eighteen feet from the front, and the two were joined by a roof of logs, thatched with sedge or tussock grass, which was covered with two to three feet of earth, ridged in the centre parallel with the front of the structure, while the roof of the long rear of the parallelogram was similarly constructed and ridged parallel with its side walls.

This extension was a warehouse. The short front section, the walls lined with cheap cotton-cloth, was floored with bridge planks and divided into three rooms, one of which was a store, and one was jointly an office and bedroom for Moultrie, while the third was for the accomomdation of occasional belated travelers. The dining-room and kitchen were at the lower end of the warehouse.

The front face had three narrow, low doorways, to pass through which a tall man would have to stoop. These were the entrances to the store.

Three American and two Mexican clerks, four corral men, five herders and two negroes were all the people employed by De Kalb, except his Mexican housekeeper and cook, and a colored boy from a military post about a hundred miles southwest.

A large stockade fence extended back from the long extension of the building fully eighty feet,

Massive double gates opened into this from the front side, adjoining the store.

The warehouse was not sufficiently commodious for the large invoice of goods, recently received from "the States," and as a consequence, a considerable quantity was piled on skids, inside the corral, and covered with heavy paulins.

In the most distant corner of the corral was a small canvas-covered stable.

Across the road, Moultrie was building an enclosure or yard, that sloped down to and crossed a little branch of the adjacent mountain stream, to a miniature island where a little house was being constructed.

This was to be a poultry yard, in charge of one of the corral men, an ex-soldier, who had lost his left hand in an Indian skirmish more than a year before, and had in consequence been discharged on a surgeon's certificate. Moultrie had had repeated proofs of his ability and honesty.

McBride—that was his name—had pre-empted certain land near by, was a fair penman and arithmetician, and would, therefore, be a useful employe; and, by accepting employment with DeKalb would be able to remain, with profit to himself, near by, to cultivate his land and satisfactorily fulfill the requirements of the government in reference to residence thereon.

Furthermore, Moultrie had taken for him the initial steps toward procuring his deserved pension.

And this is why we find him here, constructing a poultry house and yard, and in divers and sundry other directions adding an appearance of civilization to this primeval home of polecats, wolves, and wild cats, this game-abounding and wild-beasts-infested region. The poultry yard was a suggestion of McBride's.

He had, through a long experience, acquired a knack for raising chickens, geese, and ducks, in the very heart of the wild stretches of the far West, and

notwithstanding the constant inroads of destructive marauders, his broods had always thrived and rapidly multiplied.

It was an industry peculiarly pleasurable to him. As was also the cultivation of his little garden, made almost immediately upon his arrival, and located in the glen above the ranch, where the land had such a configuration that, by means of an ingenious trench and lock he had constructed, he was enabled to irrigate the different beds to the full extent of their needs.

Before a year had rolled by he had apple, cherry, peach and plum trees under way, as well as two or three varieties of grapes from vineyards in New Mexico.

True, all were young and tender, but they were full of fine promise, and were under the care of a vigilant custodian.

When Moultrie's father moved into Centipede Canyon, and became one of his nearest neighbors—twelve miles above, up the mountain gorge on the same mountain stream—the old gentleman's inspection of McBride's work, and his practical hints on horticulture, were both acceptable and very valuable.

The soldier-gardener was also supplied, liberally, with books and papers devoted to fruit culture and farm and stock interests, which he read carefully and with keen relish, and learned to understand thoroughly.

In the course of time he married one of the women employed at the Mines Hotel, and, with her help and that of the Mexican couple he had hired, he branched out in partnership with Moultrie—who supplied the capital—into the stock business, starting a dairy, which paid him handsomely from the patronage he received from the heavy overland travel, constantly increasing.

In anticipation of the establishment of the De Kalb mill, and through the active efforts of Moultrie and his uncle, many acres of soil were turned within

the area of forty miles, and a considerable amount of grain planted.

Freighters had also been informed that wheat, corn, rye, etc., bought in the kernel in New Mexico, or anywhere on the route, the following year could be ground at this prospective mill, which, it will not be amiss to say right here, Moultrie and his uncle had decided themselves to build, if the young man's father had not concluded to.

To reach the site of the mill from Moultrie's store with wagons, by way of the canyon, was difficult and exceedingly dangerous in places, but easy and safe enough on foot or horseback.

The only really accessible route for teams, at the time, was over a road that described a detour of fully sixty miles all told, and it was both narrow and precipitous, at best.

Moultrie had been over every foot of the course of the stream, between the two main highways, or "big trails" as they were called, and had early conceived the idea of shortening the route between each, and to the mill, by making a road for teams through the gulch traversed by the stream, constructing bridges at two points where crossings would be necessary.

This would connect the two stores and their toll bridges on the main highways, with the mill lying intermediate.

He had furthermore resolved, if a thorough survey should satisfy him it could be done at a small cost, to remove a few slight obstructions, and then put rafts on the river for the shipping of grain, meal and other commodities.

The current was not swift between the points, although it was a mountain stream that took its original rise from a veritable watery volcano, high up and many miles away.

Not a single cascade broke the flow between the two big trails, save the one just above McBride's irrigating ditch, and nowhere was the width less

than twenty and the channel less than four feet deep.

Its navigation seemed not a very difficult problem to solve.

Mexican burros, Moultrie thought, could be utilized on the tow path, going up stream; or mules, if burros were not heavy enough.

While these schemes were engaging his active mind, McBride, on his part, was busy with plans to benefit from the stream on a different tack.

Its waters abounded in fine, though not large, fish, and a wicker dam below the bridge, that would not perceptibly retard the currents, but would effectually bar their escape further down, was his scheme.

Already he had sent for nets and fishing tackle, and a fine harvest of the finny tribe was in anticipation by him.

Everything pointed to a prosperous future.

Volunteers, who had won their title to land by fighting, in the great rebellion, for the glorious Stars and Stripes, were settling beside the chronic squatters or claim jumpers, and sturdy, but unsuccessful, honest and hard working farmers, from the East, in search of a new Eldorado.

As yet no railroad had been projected through that section near enough to threaten a new route, with better transportation facilities for merchants, and loss to the heavy wagon freighters, with the speedy abolition of their *traite*.

The stage company had concluded to make a division terminal station at Moultrie's ranch, and a post-office had been established there.

Help was scarce, however, and such as could be obtained was not worth very much. And it was a long, tedious journey across the plains, with supplies from civilization to the distant store, in the long, narrow valley, at the grand old mountain's base.

For these reasons, Moultrie's project—to use a mining-camp phrase—"did not pan out" as promptly as he had hoped it would. His blood was up, how-

ever, and it seemed as if nothing could keep pace with or discourage his ambition.

But his cool-headed uncle held the check-rein, and the young man, as a consequence, succeeded in accomplishing gigantic strides without entanglement.

He still continued to make out weekly abstracts for his uncle, in addition to conducting his own business, having during the winter instructed a young man how to keep the books, from day to day, with sufficient clearness and accuracy to make the rendition of the account current, each week, approximately correct and neither a long nor a tedious task.

CHAPTER IX.

THE INDIANS ATTACK THE WAGON TRAIN.

ON the banks of a small stream, on the edge of Council Grove, a large, heavily laden ox-train was "hooking up," preparatory to "stringing out," and resuming its westward march.

There were eighty-odd towering "prairie schooners," in "the outfit," loaded to their fullest capacity, besides several heavy trucks and platforms on stout iron wheels, weighed down with ponderous machinery.

Traveling carriages there were also, and a herd of horses and extra cattle.

The "Yoh-haw!" of the "bull whackers," as they yoked their steers and swung them into position, flirting, with dexterity, their thirty feet long whiplashes, the stinging ends of which fell like an infuriated hornet, far ahead on the back of some unsuspecting ox, and the yells and curses of others, were not in the least suppressed because of the presence of women and children in the train.

Every teamster wore a revolver at his waist, and carried a rifle, strapped to the bows of his wagon. For they were now entering on dangerous ground, and every man knew the outfit would enjoy rare luck, if it reached its far distant destination without at least one "brush" with the Indians, while en route.

It was seldom, indeed, that an expedition of the kind had entered upon its long and snail-like journey, over that slender trail across the great plains, so well equipped with fire-arms and munitions.

Besides the teamsters, there were some fifteen men on horseback, five ladies, nine young children, and their colored female servants.

The five carriages were each drawn by four horses, and two of them were billed for Centipede Canyon, one being for Moultrie De Kalb and the other for his father.

There was also an invoice of new parts of running gear for the vehicles already at the mines, and a number of young, carefully bundled fruit-trees and berry-bushes among the freight.

The season had been backward, and Mr. De Kalb, Moultrie's father believed he could transplant these sprouts to his new home in Colorado in safety. He had undertaken it, at all hazards, on the strength of a hint in a letter from his better-half.

"I can only fail at worst," he had mused, "and if I do, she will be better pleased with my having tried to bring them." So there they were.

And so was he, Mr. De Kalb, senior, with this train. So, also, was Mr. Foster (Mrs. De Kalb's brother) with his family. He had sold his farm in the outskirts of Cedar-Crest, "to go with the rest of them," he said, "to the land of Eureka."

He had never had any confidence in Moultrie, and all along had insisted to his sister that her excessive fondness for him, even though he was an only child, was silly—that the boy was positively trifling, if not

"unbalanced," and that her treatment of him encouraged his "unworthiness."

And it was only because of her rare amiability and unswerving confidence in her darling boy, that the devoted mother brooked such language, and continued on friendly terms with her otherwise lovable brother.

On account of the excellent success of Moultrie in the brief period of his sojourn in Colorado, Mr. Foster felt satisfied that that territory would prove an Eldorado for any one as smart as himself.

Hence he had quickly signified his determination to accompany him, when the young man's father suddenly stated his intention to move there, and Moultrie, learning of this, had kindly prepared a great surprise for his hostile uncle, by carefully inspecting and locating all the available land for miles around that was in any respect promising for agriculture, intending to post him immediately on his arrival, so he could the more intelligently pre-empt.

Fatty Forbush, too, was on the train. Jolly Fatty! As rotund, roguish, and irrepressible as ever.

From boyhood he had been an amateur printer, and, now, having been suspended from college for some misdemeanor in which his portly figure had betrayed him, equipped with a printing-press, he was on his way to the Far West to start a frontier newspaper, in addition to his other occupation as submanager for Mr. De Kalb's store and mill.

The death of his father (his mother had long been dead) left no family ties he cared for, to hold him home, and the inheritance of about ten thousand dollars in cash and chattels had made him independent, pecuniarily, for a while at least.

His salary with Mr. De Kalb was to be conditioned on the work required of him, and the success of the store. In other words, he was to share with his employer in his good or ill luck. Each had per-

fect confidence in the other, and both were fully satisfied with the arrangement.

Fatty's great dream and ambition, however, was his prospective newspaper, and he swore he would enroll every wild Indian and buffalo on the plains, as a prompt-paying subscriber.

Around it hovered, with golden wings, "Great Expectations." It took two sabre-belts spliced to circumscribe Fatty's waist.

If Moultrie and others could succeed so marvelously out in that wonderful Far West, what could he not accomplish with a *newspaper!*

Of course he had had no practical experience in journalism, but neither had Moultrie had any in shop-keeping.

Yes, the booming West would boom him, and with prodigious strides he rose, in imagination, to the pinnacle of success in less than no time. This was his sleeping and waking, all absorbing thought. "Later on," he soliloquized, "I will go to Congress."

But he, with varying emotion, soon found that a paper one-half the size he had intended was much better suited to the demands of his new home.

A half-sheet, printed on both sides, was ample.

He therefore used but one form, one page of which printed the inside and the other page the outside of "*The Ute Vedette.*" Fatty had built "castles in the air."

For two weeks the great wagons of that huge overland train crept slowly on. Sometimes stringing out with long distances between each, so that it was considerably over a mile from the front to the rear one.

Fine antelope trotted up and stared from a distance, and then circled round and trotted nearer; and still again circled, coming yet nearer.

But no marksman in all that train, who had essayed an attempt, though a hundred shots had been fired, had had sufficient accuracy of aim to bring one down.

Now, after these two weeks of slow, monotonous, uneventful travel, just as all hands were beginning to grow careless, while the sun was barely two hours past meridian, they approached the spot where the great epoch in the lives of some of them was soon to transpire.

It is reached, and, with a range of low sand hills stretching out on the right—dotted here and there with bunches of wild plum trees—and with a broad shallow river on the left, the huge caravan is preparing to encamp. Already the herders have been detailed and assigned their posts and many of the oxen have been unyoked and turned loose to graze.

The cooks are busily engaged, getting their utensils, and one little group of men, women and children, cheerily talking, are arranging to put up a tent.

Suddenly, swift as the wind, and noiselessly, from two different points, there swept down from their ambush in those treacherous sand-hills, on those unsuspecting people, two legions of gaudily caparisoned and hideously painted savages.

They looked like two swift-winged hordes of demon centaurs, and not like horses and riders that could sever themselves and become separately man and beast.

On they came! One hundred human devils in the wild blazonry of war! Barbarian war!

Not civilized war, mark you, where quarter is given to a sticken foe when it is asked, but savage war! Where the battle cry is *extermination!* And where horrible mutilation follows close on the heels of merciless slaughter!

On they came! Their lances poised, and blazing in the western sunlight!

Their shields of toughened buffalo hide, decked with bright colored strips of flannel, resting on their left arms, while each stringed bow was clenched in the left hand, and the right was ready to fly to the

filled quiver of poisoned arrows, suspended over the right shoulder.

No need of bridle rein for them!

Born to the saddle, they could direct their ponies by pressure of the legs or swaying of body, far more skillfully than the most expert of civilized horsemen, trained in civilized schools, and after civilized methods.

The women and children were at the lower end of the train, and the cooks were at the upper end.

These ends had been left open, to admit the cattle when the time should arrive to drive them in from the grazing ground, for the purpose of hitching up and resuming the journey.

This was the habitual manner of parking what, in prairie parlance is called a "bull outfit."

It was customary in dangerous country, to stretch chains or ropes across the openings. But that had not been done, as yet, with this train, and straight for these openings, from opposite directions, the two Comanche war-parties made their wild, impetuous dash.

Fortunately, at the upper one, fully a dozen men, with rifles in hand, were about sallying forth to attack a few buffalo that, less than eight hundred yards distant, were slowly making toward the river, at the big bend in their front.

Nearly all these men belonged to that class known as frontiermen, and had crossed the great plains repeatedly. They were veterans, fearless, and as agile as cats.

They despised the enthusiasm of novices, as old sailors sneer at land-lubbers, during their excitement over a first squall, and had "whoahawed" their teams with perfect unconcern, during all the wild shooting that had attended the appearance of the antelopes on previous days.

But now, the bona-fide whale of the plains—the huge, lumbering buffalo, king of prairie game—was in sight.

And it was well for that train at that juncture, that they were, for those particular men who were preparing to shoot them had encountered Indians as well as buffalo before.

Among them was one, Jack Crawford, assistant wagon master, whom they all tacitly acknowledged as a leader.

His say was their say.

His orders they sprang to obey with the same alacrity sailors obey, during a fierce storm, the minutest commands of an officer, whose judgment they have tested and proven.

He was the first to see the savages, and instantly, as if by instinct, his eye swept the horizon, in every direction, to see if there were more coming, and to take in the whole situation, before he spoke a word, then, imperatively, he said in a sharp tone.

"Bivins and Walsh, you up with the chain like lightning, we've other game to look after!

"Don't shoot, boys, until I give the word, then aim low. Scatter out now near the chain, quick!"

Then, seeing several had caught sight of the Indians, he added.

"Steady, boys, steady now, no excitement!"

Every man did as ordered, and meanwhile, others further off seeing a commotion, instinctively rushed for their wagons, and unstrapped their guns, while still others, who were already preparing to clean theirs, suspended operations and loaded.

Not long had it taken for all this, not as long as it has taken to tell it. And even now, when the savages, less than three hundred yards away, broke out with loud, fierce, blood-curdling yells, they were only perceived by a majority of the people, simultaneously with the terror and excitement those yells inspired.

Truly, to be forwarned is to be forearmed.

That surprised majority were actually paralyzed with fear at their awful peril, and made impotent

haste to get at their means of defense, running blindly against each other.

The appearance of that small herd of buffalo had been providential. *God be praised!*

Every soul in the train would have been similarly terror-stricken, each to a greater or less extent, and all would have been surely massacred, if it had not come in sight just when it did.

The women and children stood for a moment as if transfixed, then those who could dashed under the nearest wagons, bruising and almost knocking themselves senseless, as they struck their heads against the axles and extra parts secured to the running gear.

On its last trip this same train had been repeatedly threatened with a similar attack, and was saved from anything serious, only by the vigilance of its managers. Now numerous troops were patrolling and their vigilance was relaxed.

Night after night, off and on for three weeks, the red freebooters of the plains had steathily galloped up under cover of darkness, and fired volleys into it, directing their aim at its camp-fires, and, when those were prohibited, at the white wagon covers looming up against the horizon.

They had fired the grass ahead in its track repeatedly, and thereby half starved the cattle, and, but for the semi-empty condition of the wagons would have seriously impeded its progress, and in all probability have compelled the abandonment of some portions.

Nearly one-third of the teamsters had resigned, on arrival at Kansas City, rather than run the risk of repeating such exposures and hardships by another trip west, and these had been replaced largely by green hands.

These facts should have made greater vigilance the rule with the contractors and wagon masters, and, in no instance, before this onset occurred, after halt-

ing, should any of the guns have remained strapped to the wagon.

When the Indians in front of Crawford's squad saw the reception in store for them, at a sign from one who towered in his saddle and seemed to be their chief, they split into two parties and each half described a receding curve to the right and left, striking off on tangents, directly crosswise with their former imposing approach.

But they were too late.

Their tactics had been fully understood and "Fire!" Crawford shouted, in the loudest of tones.

Two-thirds of the guns in the hands, of his little party, were Spencer Rifles, (seven-shooters) while the others were repeating-arms of various descriptions. And they were all used with excellent effect.

A dozen or more redmen tumble from their saddles, or went down with their stricken horses, at the first discharge, and the firing was kept up until they rode off beyond range, or were lost to sight as they retreated among the bushes to the left, or to the lower ground, skirting the river on the right.

Meanwhile their allies, the attacking force on the other flank, had not fared so disastrously.

They wrought much injury, before they were repulsed, and besides killing three men, carried off two women and two children.

But for Crawford and some of his party, who hurried most timely to their assistance, several others would have been killed, and the brutal savages might have had it all their own way.

As it was, they succeeded in partially cutting off the herders and several others who had gone for water to the river bank.

It was in this way that they captured one of the ladies with her nurse and two children, who had strolled out of the corral to pick wild plums.

The boys were each taken by an arm and thrown roughly across the pommel of a saddle, and the

mother (who had fallen fainting), was rudely seized, and unceremoniously treated likewise by a stalwart and powerful red fiend, from whose visage—painted half yellow and half green—a pair of sharp, black eyes scintillated like those of an infuriated snake.

With a shriek, that made the welkin ring and rose in its piercing distinctness clear above the war-whoop of the Indians, the comely looking colored girl gave vent to her horror and pain, as she was lifted by her hair into a like position by her captor, who beat her face and head with the handle of his tomahawk to compel quiet, until she became insensible from the blows.

Off to the rear and right these inhuman wretches galloped, passing, by a tortuous defile, through the sand-hills out to the open prairie beyond, over a mile away.

Here they pitched their captives, *sans ceremonie*, from their saddles to the ground, and leaving them in charge of a bevy of jabbering squaws, more cruel, if possible, than themselves, hurried back to the vicinity of the train.

There " confusion worse confounded " reigned.

Probably one-half of the oxen had been turned loose before the approach of the Indians became generally known, and these had scattered considerably, though very few were over seventy-five yards outside the wagons.

The excitement prevailing caused a partial stampede, but a majority of them, considerably terrified, rushed inside the corral and created no little diversion by wildly colliding with, knocking down and trampling under foot the train employes.

Arrows and rifle balls came swift and thick in perfect showers among them, for the redmen were variously armed, and discharged their death-dealing missiles with the rapidity always characteristic of them in battle.

But for their customary inaccuracy of aim, and the presence of the frightened cattle, which served as a

breast-work, in many instances, the casualties must have been far greater.

These formidable looking and terrifying prairie buccaneers are, it seems, incapable of becoming sharp-shooters. And when under excitement and on horse-back, in large parties, they shoot very much at random.

There are, of course, individual exceptions, isolated instances of excellent markmanship, but they are few and far between comparatively, and the percentage of good shots falls considerably short of that of white troops.

But, while wild shooting can be truthfully alleged as a fortunate feature of the attack, it is also a fact that the train-men themselves were not what one would call experts, except perhaps gallant, unpretentious Jack Crawford.

He was a superb marksman, a dead shot.

The others—the best of them—were merely moderately good. Nevertheless, throughout, they were fearless and cool. Those with Jack after having repulsed one party turned to assist in repelling the other.

Their fire very soon told effectively, and the Indians at the rear of the train were compelled to draw off, as those at the front had done, though not in the same manner.

They fell back, precipitately, beyond range, and sat on their horses a long while, as if waiting for some onset from the teamsters. Some sortie for which they did not propose to be unprepared.

Now and then "little bunches" (to quote a frontier phrase), would ride off over the hills, out of sight, and subsequently they could be seen joining the main party.

While sentinels, posted over the train to watch and report all these, as well as any other movements, were faithfully doing their duty, the chief wagon-master and his assistants employed them-

selves in forming a more perfect organization for defense.

The count-up showed four men killed, nine wounded, and three unaccounted for. One white and one colored woman and two children had been captured.

Seven steers were killed, three badly hurt, and eleven slightly wounded, and twenty-eight were missing.

Four horses were so severely hurt that one died, and the other three were shot to rid them of their suffering.

Mr. Foster received a bullet through the arm, and old Mr. De Kalb was knocked senseless by a shot that struck him in the head, and which, for some time, it was supposed had killed him. Later on, however, he returned to consciousness, and sat up under the wagon where he had been dragged, to prevent his mutilation by the trampling of the frightened cattle.

Then a closer examination disclosed that he had merely received a severe scalp wound, that had stunned him into insensibility.

In the frantic rush of the cattle, one of the carriages had been pretty badly wrecked in its upper rigging.

CHAPTER X.

A NIGHT OF TERROR.

NIGHT finally closed in on the scene, and what a night of terror and dread it was!

Many another stout-hearted and cool-headed fellow, all self-possessed in danger by daylight, would have quailed, and wished himself in civilization, or somewhere else than there, as did the bravest of that besieged party.

The eight hours of darkness made that night an epoch in their lives.

Angry, storm-freighted clouds gathered overhead, and shut out the stars completely. Chilling blasts swept down through the defiles of the fiend-peopled, ghostly-looking sand hills, with a sepulchral moan, and flapped the wagon covers with an unceasing rat-tat-tat, that would have effectually drowned any noise arising from an hostile approach.

The flashes of lightning were fitful and dim, with no artillery of heaven resounding in accompaniment, and only served, at long intervals, to faintly light up the outline of those same white hills.

There was no water in the train, and every one was more thirsty for knowing it.

None had been obtained, for those red fiends now holding the river bank had swooped down on the corral before there was time. And none of the men in the train would dare venture for a supply.

In fact, none had thought of doing so before night set in, and now the darkness and the situation were too appalling to think of it, save with a shudder and a look aghast.

Their own unburied dead lay stark and stiff around them, looking,

O! so ghastly, in the fitful glimmer of the silent lightning!

A great thirst, augmented by their supper of bacon, eaten raw as fires were forbidden, added to the torment of a fatigue they dared not relieve, even with a single hour of sleep. Nay, not with a single moment.

This state of affairs unnerved everyone to a degree the inexperienced would scarce believe, and the noise of the storming elements, added to the terrible darkness, which would have so successfully covered the approach of the stealthy and cat-like foe they looked for momentarily, only served to enhance the prevailing terror.

The long separated and weak flashes of lightning

merely lit up the surroundings sufficiently to give them weird and spectral shapes, indefinable, after which deeper gloom than before prevailed.

It was the awful *uncertainty* that gave the night its greatest horror!

Would the Indians attack them before daylight? was the all absorbing question.

The barking and hideous snarling of hordes of ravenous wolves that surrounded the train, and demanded the spilled blood they had so keenly scented from afar, the melancholy note of the whip-poor-will and the ominous cry of a score of owls—these, blood curdling and dismal as they were, were comparatively nothing.

It was that terrible uncertainty! The unknown intentions of those red fiends who never gave and never looked for quarter, and in whose creed the unmerciful mutilation of a conquered foe was a cardinal salient.

The country was swarming with them, for all the tribes throughout that section were on the war-path, and how did the people of that train know but that reinforcements to the besieging party were joining, at that very moment, powerful enough to sweep every soul of them into eternity at one single determined dash.

The Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Comanches, Kiowas, and Apaches—even the Utes—had donned war paint and were rampant.

The two ladies still safe and the children were in a more fearful state of mind than can be imagined by any save those who have it in their power to recur to a like experience.

A bullet-proof barricade had been built for them of boxes filled with merchandise and sacks of flour and grain, and they had laid their beds under a wagon, the running gear of which had been stripped of its usual lashings, so as to afford all the room possible.

Here they huddled together in helpless terror.

A stout rope was so stretched as to protect the

carriages from the cattle now herded inside the corral.

A large canvas paulin did service as a roof over the area occupied by the families, and afforded them excellent shelter from the cold rain, that nearly all night poured down, and completely drenched every one else.

A chilling "Norther" began blowing just before daybreak—commencing too late to supply the relief from thirst they had hoped and longed for, without making further reliance on the river necessary.

During those weary hours of darkness and dread, while the little ones would articulate piteous pleadings for water to the anxious mothers, suffering even more than they, Jack Crawford constantly hovered near and, with cheering words, at the same time that he scrupulously respected their privacy, gave the ladies much encouragement.

Now he would halt in his walk, close by their enclosure, and say:

"With our completed defenses, boys, all the cowardly red-skins in North America could not take us, and as we are likely to meet only a squad of the sneakingest among the whole lot, if we meet any at all, and I don't think we will, I really believe two-thirds of you had better turn in and get some sleep.

"I know prairie Indians, and don't you be afeared. They won't attack wide-awake guns in the night time.

"I've talked with old trappers, and with Texas Rangers, and with cavalry officers who've had piles of experience, I've talked with government scouts, too, that's what I'm going to be—and all of 'em say so.

"We're safe, perfectly. So turn in two-thirds and catch a snooze."

Then again he would be heard saying:

"I'm glad to see such a heavy guard around the women and children."

The space cannot be spared, nor is it necessary to

go into further detail in this connection. Suffice it to say, he succeeded in his object, and lulled the women into fitful slumbers, slumbers thronged with entrancing visions of exquisitely beautiful, ice-cold crystal cataracts, leaping from jewel-gemmed rocky recesses, down vine-sheltered precipices, and out into massive, sun-kissed water-mirrors, resting tranquilly here, or ripplingly there, on thick beds of rich green moss.

O, the cool draughts they quaffed!

The warmth of a genial sun permeated the flower-perfumed air, but its blazing rays were shut out and softened by a pavilion of breathing verdure, arched far overhead.

The sward on which they reclined was soft as swan's-down. Rich-plumaged birds, with rarest vocal powers, flitted about and sang sweet lays; and huge stalactites, moisture-clothed, in crystal-mouthed grottoes, like diamond eyes set in declivitous hill-sides, looked down on and watched over their repose.

Lovely water and woodland sprites, clad in delicate tasselings of ice and gold, flexible as silk, came in gay troops from fountains and dells, and played beautifully on harps of frost and danced on the face of falling cascades, scattering cooling spray broadcast.

The soft gurgling of the transparent waters was a delicious lullaby, wooing them to sweet sleep.

Fantastic, incoherent, yet rhapsodical; these mocking dreams were both blissful and restful.

The frightful night drew on toward morning, with a snail-like and exasperating slowness.

And finally when, just at dawn, complete relaxation had set in, and the limp limbs and peace-lit faces of both children and mothers betokened Morpheus's supreme reign, the pattering of "heaven's tears" on the canvas roof over their heads, and the swooping of the winds through the river valley, were a soothing lullaby, reinforcing that health-promoting

monarch and sweet restorer of tired nature—sleep—in his now absolute control.

So they slept on, until the god of day was high up in his march toward the empyrean, and it was an hour of noon when they finally awoke.

Much refreshed, but burning with thirst, they greedily quaffed the cool water offered them, and which had been caught, while they slept, in the wide basin that Jack Crawford had made from one of the largest paulins in the train.

The huge tin dipper containing the draught, had been one-third filled with sparkling hail-stones that had come down in myriads from the cloud-battlements, skyward, in the last charge of the storm, made just before the sun had pierced and dissipated its forces.

How invitingly these lay on the parched tongue, how deliciously they cooled the fevered palate, and how cheery, after this much needed refreshment, the beautiful sunlight was to each of them.

CHAPTER XI.

RESCUED AFTER A THREE DAYS' SIEGE.

THE sun had thrice risen in the east and had traveled down its western slope, and the last drop of rain-water had been long since consumed, when the head wagon-master, just as dawn was breaking, called all hands together, and talked to them in earnest words for several minutes.

He said he thought it would be unwise to break up the corral until there was perfect certainty that the Indians had withdrawn permanently, and, besides, they did not have enough cattle left to pull

all the wagons, since their recent loss from the attack.

He recalled one instance in his own recollection, which occurred several years before the war, wherein the Indians had lain in ambush with the utmost secrecy, and at a considerable distance from a wagon-train en route for Utah, for seven days, and had even under cover of darkness, driven some buffalo up, quite close to their intended victims, and when some of the teamsters had sallied forth to bring them down, the savages had permitted them to come quite close to their lurking-places without molesting or even showing themselves.

True, the situation then, was different from the present one, for at the time he reverted to, the train he was with had been forced, under much sudden excitement and confusion, and amidst a great shower of poisoned arrows that rained down on them, to corral as hurriedly as possible, at a point on the prairie ten miles from the first water ahead, and twenty-five from the nearest on the trail to the rear.

Fortunately the weather had been crisp and cool, the road had been very good, game had been abundant, and there was, in consequence, a plenteous supply of fresh meat, buffalo and antelope, in the train.

There was also on hand, in the kegs and barrels fastened to the running gear of the wagons, a much larger supply of water than would have been the case if, during the three days they had been traveling from the last stream, the trainmen had subsisted on the bacon and salt pork that constituted their regular meat rations.

The Indians, however, who had attacked them and, after a desperate fight and severe loss on both sides in men and animals, had been repulsed, knew that, sooner or later, the water supply would give out.

They also knew that the trail passed through a deep gorge to the front, and a canyon to the rear,

and that the train must go through either one or the other before it could reach water in any direction.

The outfit was a large one, and, effectually corralled as it was, a secure fortress against any Indian attack, for the people comprising it.

And furthermore, nothing in the tactics of those red men contemplated an assault or anything half so formidable.

No, their plan was to wait until the train hooked up and strung out; for then, their system of warfare would give them the vantage. And, unfortunately, there was not a teamster, or other person there who knew that fact, or, knowing it, gave it sufficient weight.

So, on the seventh day the trainmen raised the siege, and whoa-hawed their steers into line, and renewed their slow, westward march.

The last wagon had hardly pulled out and taken its place in the long, lumbering line, when, on both sides, as if by magic, the horizon became the background of two large bodies of savages, who swooped down toward them, like two hordes of wild Mamelukes, and breaking up into several parties, began circling and discharging arrows in showers at them.

How long this would have lasted, no one can conjecture, had not a considerable body of mounted riflemen, scouts and cowboys, debouching from the deep gorge ahead, come galloping to the rescue. At sight of these the Indians vanished almost as suddenly as they had appeared. And the rescuers did not pursue them. In fact, they had been sent from a garrison, some miles ahead, to meet and escort this very train, which was laden with one year's supplies for that very fort.

The commanding officer, having learned from scouts that a large, Indian war party had started out on the trail to waylay whatever they might come across, had hurried the departure of the troops with the very opportune result narrated.

While under fire the train had begun to form a

corral again to the front, and some of the teams had succeeded in massing there, while others, at intervals, because of cattle shot down, could not move, and by impeding those in their rear wrought much confusion, and no little desperation and dismay.

Every man knew only too well what the consequences would be if the savages once got the upper hand of them. And they mustered all their courage to avert such a terrible catastrophe.

Although the onset had been short-lived, it had caused sad havoc, and some time ensued before order again reigned.

When it did finally, and the wagon-masters were enabled to take stock of the situation they found they had been pretty badly crippled all around. Dead and wounded oxen, and dead and wounded men, sprinkled the prairie much more numerously than they had thought.

"Especially had the cattle succumbed to the deadly missiles of the enemy, and fully one-eighth of those of the entire train were dead or dying.

It must be remembered that there had been two attacks made on the outfit, both nearly on the same ground.

But the gallant men who had come to the rescue, were not slow in supplementing the succor they had given, with generous proffers of the use of their animals, and in a short time very comical looking harnesses were improvised, and horses and steers, in amiable companionship, were tugging away in united effort to pull the wagons with their precious freight through to their destination.

The riders of the horses took the places of the dead teamsters, and did very well as substitutes.

Some of them in fact "had been there before," and were quite expert in their manipulation of the teams.

All the incidents of this event loomed up in the chief wagon-master's memory, as vividly as if an

occurrence of but yesterday, and he was in doubt what to do.

With the single exception of that one train, as far as he knew from his own experience, and as far as he had been told by others well qualified to speak, the savages generally, in trying to take a train or camp risked their chances on a single, wild, impetuous dash.

If they succeeded or were repulsed, in either case the game was always up. Success with them invariably meant the massacre of those they defeated.

It was not for him to say, solely on his own judgment, how it would be in the present instance, he argued.

The prairies are swarming with the red devils, but Custer and his cavalry, as well as numerous other soldiers are scouting about, in every direction, in search of them.

Troops are everywhere in the saddle, and on the march, and not merely loitering in comfortable forts, waiting for news of massacres.

Furthermore, the train is in camp between two large forts, neither of which is a hundred miles away, and we are also in plain sight of the overland mail route that passes over another trail, joined to the one we are on fifteen miles ahead.

"I mention these facts," he said, "as a possible cause for the withdrawal of the Indians, if they are aware of them," and he thought there could be no doubt on that score.

"They have given no signs of their continuance in the vicinity for full seventy hours," he added.

"This indicates one of two things." Either they are gone entirely, or they have laid some cunning plan, and are still lying silently in wait to pounce on us again as soon as our force is divided by the sortie of a party for water.

"Such a sortie must be made, and they know it as well as we do.

"Whatever the situation might be, whatever the

doubt and danger, the sortie must be made; we must have water and that very soon.

"Who will be the forlorn hope?

"Who will volunteer to form a party of twenty to sally forth for this much-needed article?

"Whoever does, must make up his mind to face some pretty lively music. For, if the Indians are lying around in ambush, probably not a soul will get back alive.

"I do not want a single man to think of starting, unless he first takes this prospect into full account, and then makes up his mind to keep cool in spite of everything, and do his level best."

None of his listeners could help realizing that they must have water, or die right where they were.

The children were suffering tortures.

Of course, they could not hold out with the patience of grown people.

Night too was again creeping on and therefore there was no time for delay.

He then asked all who were willing to volunteer for the venture to step at once over the chain, to the outside of the barricade.

And the words were scarce out of his mouth when a general rush was made in that direction.

This surprised and embarrassed but also highly pleased him. Yes, he thought, he could trust such men. And now arose the question, whom from amongst them should he select? He must determine who are best fitted to go, and who to remain as a reserve.

He walked back, thoughtfully, and consulted with the contractors, and they finally agreed to appoint Jack Crawford as leader, and authorize him to choose his followers.

The men cheered when, a few moments later, this arrangement was announced.

"I don't hanker after it," said Jack, his face flush-

ing, as he tightened his waist-belt and pushed his revolver further down into its holster.

"If any of you boys are the least ambitious, you can have it.—I'll resign."

But they answered him with a laugh and rallying remarks, then looked toward the women. They were rough-hewn cavaliers—*Americans!*

Everyone knew that when Jack superintended, in any desperate venture, there would be neither laches nor mistakes.

He was a strict disciplinarian, vigilant, careful and fearless, without any of the characteristics of a martinet.

Everyone placed implicit reliance on his judgment, caution, experience and nerve, and felt that he would neither omit necessary nor impose unnecessary obligation or restraint, and the final out-come, in many previous, serious situations, had justified that reliance.

It will therefore be appreciated that his presence, with this train, at this time, was in the nature of a godsend. The all-seeing Almighty was here again.

A consultation was now held between the head men and our gallant frontier-man, and a program promptly arranged, For there was not a moment to lose, the shades of night were falling.

Meanwhile, all hands carefully examined their fire-arms, and, where necessary, replenished their supply of ammunition.

Finally, everything—every detail for any and all possible contingencies—being settled, Jack was asked to announce his following. All hands silently crowded around him.

The majority of men, under like circumstances, would have selected fellows of acknowledged, undoubted coolness in danger, and expertness in the use of fire-arms.

Herein Jack differed from the majority of men.

He chose ten of the best shots, who were sinewy and quick as well, and of small stature, and then

picked out the ten brawniest and most muscular stalwarts in the train, to complete his party.

While he was doing this, the water kegs scattered here and there among the wagons were collected by others, and slung on "spreaders" and wagon poles.

There was, however, much disappointment and resentment manifested by several who thought they should have been selected for the sortie.

"He'll never make the bilge with that gang, if the red Niggers jump him," said one, very bitterly.

"Your head's on top for once," spoke another.

"See here, Crawford, old fel," exclaimed a third, beckoning him aside—a third who was an intimate:

"Why ain't I in this lay-out? Ain't I good enough for ye? My carcass would be as sweet for coyotes as any of that ar lot.

"What's the matter? Are ye goin' back on an ole pard? Didn't I allus stick?"

"I want you where you will be more useful, where there'll be more important work if the reds show up," responded Jack, pleasantly.

"Oh! stuff and gammon! Rattlesnakes chew me! You doubt me!" replied the other, excitedly shaking his forefinger in gesticulation.

"What yer givin' me, anyhow? *What* work can be more important?"

"Look here!" exclaimed Jack, in mock alarm, as he eyed the upraised finger, comically.

"Is that loaded?"

"Is *what* loaded?"

Inquired the other, with an unfeigned sneer.

"That!"

Answered Jack, pointing to his finger and smiling brightly.

"Put it down! It might go off."

The grumbler was silenced, and giving Crawford a reproachful look, he walked sullenly up the corral.

The preparations being completed, the water carriers, the ten stalwarts, shouldering the kegs, and escorted by the ten quick and wiry best shots, who

were their appointed guard, started for the river. Several empty casks were suspended from each pole, either end of which rested on a stout shoulder.

These they were ordered to bring back quickly, filled or empty, in case Indians attacked them, while the guard were to cover their retreat as best they could.

Another party of the best shots left in the train, headed by our grumbling friend with the loaded forefinger, was ordered to stand in readiness, and dash to the rescue against any attacking party.

Under no consideration were the kegs to be abandoned! "Die first!" ordered Jack. No need of order like that to men like that.

Every other gun in the train was, at the same time, judiciously placed at the barricades.

No precaution that the wisdom and experience of the trainmasters could suggest was omitted. And the advance of the *forlorn hope* was watched breathlessly.

On they went watchfully, cautiously, steadily. The two skirmishers, deployed to the extreme front, gave no sign, as they receded, of the discovery of anything suspicious.

Soon they were on lower ground and out of sight, hidden from view by the intervening bushes.

Still all continued quiet. The suspense grew painful, terrible!

"They're at the river by this time," said the head wagon-master, about five minutes later.

Just then a treamster was noticed hurrying from the other end of the train, excitedly speaking to those he passed, distributed at intervals through its length, all of whom looked off into the sand-hills to the north-east.

It took him but a brief time, running at the top of his speed, to reach the front barricade and when he got there, all out of breath, his exclamations were like a succession of electric alarms. The author's philology is too scant to state in one word that he

was excited, blown, intrepid, hot for a "scrimmage," and eager to let all hands join in, and tenderly thoughtful of the women and children.

"They're comin' boys! sneakin' up!"

He shouted.

"I saw the flash of their guns and trappins in the sunlight, way back there!" pointing northeastwardly.

"Nearly a mile away I saw them pass between two hills! The sun did it! If the sun hadn't been shinin' I wouldn't a seen 'em! It shone on their guns and things." And considerable excitement followed this announcement, and the head wagon-master hastened to the flank from whence the messenger had come.

There he learned that a considerable body of men on horseback, whom the guard could not clearly distinguish, but nevertheless saw, had crossed a distant gap in the hills, about a mile to the east.

The topography of the country aided materially to obscure them, and also hide their identity.

The peculiar shade thrown upon, and the configuration of the intermediate space and background being such that, but for the reflection of the sunlight on their arms and accoutrements, the unknown party might have passed unobserved.

"Were they powerful reinforcements that the attacking party had been all this time awaiting the arrival of?" the chief wagon-master asked himself, in dire alarm, while, to all outward appearance, cool and self-contained.

"How terrible!" he said to himself. And then his face became set, with a hard, desperate, determined expression. But he spoke not another word.

"We'll keep a sharp lookout and be ready for em!" said the man in charge of the squad at that point. And then, while all eyes were strained in the direction indicated, there suddenly rose from behind the nearest sand hill, not five hundred yards away, and quickly mounted to its top, a cavalry soldier,

holding his gun in his right hand, at "Advance carbine," and his bridle rein in the left.

On he came, at a steady walk straight toward them, his horse kicking the loose sand in showers, as he trudged down the hill-side.

Then another, and another, and still another appeared, until several were in view, scattered at intervals of about twenty yards apart, all marching abreast, as straight as a plumb line. A cavalry skirmish line it was.

Finally the head of the column, marching by twos, emerged from a defile less than three hundred yards away, and directly opposite the train. And wild cheers of relief went up spontaneously from the rescued teamsters, and the greenhorns and the veterans embraced and actually kissed each other.

Already the water carriers were returning with filled kegs, ignorant of what had occurred, and Jack Crawford coming up reported that the Indians had carried off their dead, and had most outrageously carved the carcasses of their ponies that had been killed.

When the troops arrived within about one hundred yards they were halted, and the captain in command galloped up and asked for "the man in charge of the outfit."

The head wagon-master at once stepped forward from the crowd assembled at the front barricade.

Meanwhile, a lieutenant quietly ordered the soldiers to "left front into line" and "dismount," after which they slipped the bits from the mouths of their horses and stood by them while they cropped the grass.

This same chief wagon-master was a fine specimen of physique, being six feet two inches in height, with broad, square shoulders, and a figure that tapered downward like a boy's top.

His waist looked wasp-like and womanish, and his chest was massive and deep.

His head was unusually small and his hair long.

His brown beard and moustache were long and flowing and almost silken in fineness.

High top-boots encased his shapely feet and limbs, nearly to the hips, and his faded and worn buckskin gauntlets reached to his elbows.

His broad-brimmed, light-colored slouch hat, large, red and blue handkerchief, tied loosely around his neck, and his waist-belt filled with cartridges, a brace of pistols, and a long, dangerous knife, these tout ensemble, as he presented himself before the military officer with a Winchester rifle in hand, gave him a decidedly brigandish appearance.

The captain alighted, and passed his bridle-rein to the trumpeter in his rear, who immediately rode off to a patch of green and succulent looking grass, some eighty yards toward the river.

After an introduction to the contractors, they and the officer retired down the corral, and entered into a long and earnest talk, and the lieutenant, at a signal from the commander, had the cavalry men lead off to a point about six hundred yards up the river, where they unsaddled, hobbled, and turned their horses out to graze, placing a strong guard in their midst.

Vedettes were also immediately posted on prominent hills, some distance away, in different directions, overlooking the surrounding country, to give the alarm if Indians showed themselves, by riding in a circle.

The guard amongst the horses had orders to watch the videttes vigilantly, and report any signal from them promptly to the senior officer in camp, and at the same time secure the animals. Rapid riding meant,—

The Indians are near and approaching, and there is no time for delay.

All the particulars of the attack on the train and the losses sustained were communicated in detail to this military commander, and, after a bumper or two of good, strong, stimulating refreshment, he ex-

plained how he happened to run across them so opportunely.

"Whether it was the one that attacked you or not, I am unable to say," he began.

"But on the upper road, at the first stage ranch west of the fort, a big party of "Reds" showed up six days ago.

"They jumped the east-bound mail, just as it was coming in, killing four passengers and the driver, and after setting fire to the coach moved south with the four horses they had captured.

"I haven't the least doubt but that they are the same fellows that gave you such a lively tussel.

"The pony tracks in the hills so far as could be discerned, and the evidences I have discovered of their short bivouacs, are about three days old if I can correctly judge.

"At those places it was plain to see, all around on the grass, that the tracks were those of unshod mustangs.

"I came across plenty of proofs of the presence near here of a party about the size you speak of. And everything indicated that they had probably hung around for two or three days after you had repulsed them.

"I wish my guide was here. He served me a nice trick after promising not to touch a drop until the scout was finished, or at least until I gave him permission to take a drink.

"Had he kept his word I could have been here four or five days ago, because he is familiar with every inch of the country, and could have come by a bee-line.

"But he did not. He took the first opportunity that presented to break it.

"I might have raised your siege, at least, if I did not succeed in punishing the Reds.

"I am very sorry he did not keep his word.

"I left him dead drunk at the stage ranch, where he

froze to a couple of bottles of forty-rod, and wrestled with them until they threw him.

"The attack of the Indians I am after, on the mail coach, was seen plainly from the station, and after they let up and moved south, a runner was sent into the fort and reported it.

"Our expedition, of six companies and a squad of scouts, had just returned from the northwest, pretty well played out after a big fruitless chase on a large Sioux trail.

"These fellows who worried you are undoubtedly Cheyennes.

"Well, our party was cut up into three detachments, one of which went straight south, and one southeast, while I, with my command, came to the trail at the stage station, which I took up and followed until it scattered, so that I lost it.

"I continued on southwest, however, thinking they would turn up somewhere on this overland route, lying in wait for something, and the rest you know.

"We have had a hard march, have been in the saddle almost constantly for thirty-six hours—and besides, were nearly used up when we came in off the Sioux trail.

"Our horses are completely broken down with lameness, sorebacks and overwork.

"Pass me that jug, Colonel," he added.

"I'm as stiff as a ramrod and maybe another dose will limber me up some."

The jug was passed.

While the conversation just repeated was going on, Crawford, at the rear end of the corral, was speaking cheery words to the children, in the hearing of the ladies, at the same time assisting Mr. Foster in the filling of his buckets and various other vessels with water from the kegs just brought.

Meanwhile fires were built, and preparations were underway for the first coffee had for five days.

"You must take supper with us, Mr. Crawford, said Mrs. Foster, smilingly.

"For look at these, ain't they a surprise, though?"

And then the good woman, her face aglow with pleasure, opened a blue gingham sun-bonnet she held in her hand, and exposed to view quite a number of fresh eggs, that had been laid by the industrious ones among the hundred or more hens she was taking to Colorado. (Crawford's chivalrous soul wanted to knight those hens on the instant).

"These will be just, *just* too delicious for anything, with bacon and some of my nice, hot biscuit, and Government Java, and you are entitled to a great, big *heaping* dish, for having brought the water."

Jack said in a solemn tone, turning his eyes upward:

"I am willing to be sacrificed, my dear Mrs. Foster."

And seating himself on the bottom of an up-turned horse-pail, he rattled off a constant flow of rippling small talk, while the savory meal was being cooked, and indulged in homely but pithy retort and repartee with the ladies, until, from the merriment of the little party, one would scarce imagine they had been in such recent great peril and terror.

Although the men killed had been buried, the carcasses of the slain cattle had been merely rolled against different openings between the wagons to serve as additional breastworks.

These were now being dragged to a distance, and all night long a hideous and snarling requiem was performed over them, by the ravenous and quarrelsome coyotes, engaged in rending and devouring their flesh.

The wounded men of the train were skillfully attended by the surgeon and hospital steward, happily with the troops, and in more than one case that attendance came just in the nick of time.

The torn and lacerated flesh, from neglect, was fast becoming gangrenous.

During the next two days, which were given to

recuperation, the contractors busied themselves running over their inventory, in order to determine what particular goods they could best afford to unload and leave behind, for, with their diminished number of animals, they would not be able to continue the transportation of all in the train.

Meanwhile Crawford occupied himself actively with a gang of teamsters, preparing a cache at a point in the nearest hill, which had been finally determined on after an exhaustive search for the best place.

CHAPTER XII.

WESTWARD HO! AGAIN.

On the afternoon of the second day, a long train of sixty odd wagons was descried coming from the west and its nearer approach developed that the owner was an acquaintance who, two years before, under very similar circumstances, had been relieved by our friends, and liberally supplied, at cost, with provisions and cattle sufficient to carry him through comfortably to his journey's end, thereby averting a cache.

The cavalry had continued in their bivouac carefully nursing their horses, the farrier had tightened all loose shoes, and the soldiers and train people had become quite intimate and friendly.

The commanding officer, as a wise precaution, had required his men to keep their carbines and belts with them constantly, wherever they went, but otherwise had allowed them all the freedom that could be reasonably desired.

When the head wagon-master and contractors the next morning began negotiations for the purchase

of every steer that could be spared from the almost empty train of the stranger, they did not meet with that liberal treatment they had accorded him two years previous. They found now, that "the shoe was on the other foot."

There was no alternative, however, and the unreasonable prices demanded, had either to be paid, or consequences more disastrous be incurred.

Shippers in those days judged of the efficiency of contractors by *results* almost solely.

If they loaded and got underway with despatch, and made their long tedious and perilous trips with expedition, delivering the freight consigned to their care at its proper destination thoroughly intact, then they were pronounced royal, reliable, trustworthy fellows, full of snap, energy and fertile invention to overcome obstacles, and possessed of practical good sense and scrupulous honesty.

And, as a result, they could not begin by half to fill the orders that deluged them.

If, on the other hand, continuous heavy rains and consequent high and impassable streams delayed progress, and interspells of freezing put a thick icy crust on the surface of the thoroughly soaked and almost bottomless prairie trails, over which the heavy wagons had to plough tediously, or if violent thunder storms terrified and stampeded their stock, entailing the irrecoverable loss of many cattle, in such cases only a moiety of sympathy or charity was felt for the unfortunate freighter by the disappointed and ofttimes exasperated merchant or mine-owner, who, because of the non-receipt of his goods on time frequently suffered a serious loss.

It is pretty much the same on the Indian frontier as it is in large cities. That merchant whose enterprise first stocks the market with new and seasonable goods is sure to be the merchant who, everything else being equal, will receive the largest patronage and thrive best.

Buyers from personal considerations of friendship

will, for awhile, purchase in preference from personal friends.

But when those friends fail to carry in stock what they want, or get the same tardily and late, it is not human nature to keep up inconveniencing oneself from such "personal considerations of friendship."

Hence both the frontier and metropolitan merchant who "gets there," with his wares ahead of all competitors is sure to command the bulk of trade.

In view of this fact the mercantile beheading of the unfortunate freighter, whom the Indians and the elements retarded in the delivery of his merchandise, cannot be marveled at.

Though the making of a cache was not of frequent necessity with overland trains, there were causes that compelled some very extensive ones at times, and, in the preceding fall, over $100,000 worth of goods had been unloaded from a single large train, and buried in five different places within an area of six hundred yards.

A certain frontier honor always made these temporary interments of property sacred, and by every plainsman it was considered a heinous crime to disturb them.

But there were swarms of boodle searchers and "body snatchers," who "to put money in their purse" ignored this sentiment in reference to these burials, with fully as much indifference and recklessness as inhuman grave robbers, near medical colleges, ignore the sanctity of human charnel-houses.

And whenever a cache was robbed, suspicion and accusation invariably implicated "boss freighters," and coupled them, in criminality and hateful complicity, with the real robbers.

If not openly denounced as swindlers and thieves, their guilt was, at least, covertly whispered and meanly, under cover of confidence,—"strict confidence you know—" insinuated or asserted, with wise nods and expressive looks, by mischief makers and scandal mongers.

The world has a host, ever active, to whom scandal is the breath of their nostrils. The men who ran this outfit knew these facts only too well, and their honor was at stake. They were physically and morally brave.

And, actuated by a heartfelt desire to faithfully fulfill their contracts, and a determination to do so *at all hazards!* they hurriedly acceded to the exorbitant impositions on their helplessness, and paid to the east-bound train twice as much per head for half-serviceable cattle, as that train had afterward to pay for prime oxen to replace them, when outfitting, later on, for another westward trip.

Therefore there was no need to cache any of the merchandise, and the train hooked up and moved on next morning.

The cavalry meanwhile saddled, mounted and made a short scout up the river, swinging around finally, and returning by a wide detour to the fort it came from.

Throughout the exciting scenes just narrated Fatty Forbush maintained unusual quiet.

He was the proud owner of a revolver of French manufacture, and a breech-loading rifle of English make, with both of which he used metallic cartridges.

He also carried a formidable looking bowie-knife, and all together looked quite warlike indeed.

Thus armed and equipped he placed himself, promptly, wherever his chief of squad ordered, and aside from his alacrity, cheerfully helped in all their duties—first this one and then that, among the train hands, doing it unostentatiously and winning golden opinions that served him well, when he was, later on, stricken down with fever and lost all his superfluous avoirdupois.

It was like bread cast upon the water returning.

He was attended faithfully during his illness, and though the nursing was rude, and the resources for

comfort very slender and scarce, he passed the crisis safely and at last fully recovered.

"You're climated now and down ter yer fitin' weight," was the pleasant remark from one trainman, as Fatty again sat at the camp fire, and ate his first meal after rising from his rough sick-bed, on top of a pile of boxes in one of the wagons.

From that hour he rapidly gained strength, and was "sound as a dollar" when Centipede Canyon was reached.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOULTRIE, GROWN RICH, EXTENDS HIS BUSINES

TWO years after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, Moultrie, under the firm style of "De Kalb & Co.," entered into copartnership with a sutler—or "post-trader," as he was latter on styled—who had several stores, and the inside track on army and Indian contracts at numerous Western forts and agencies for hay, fuel, grain, etc.

The land about Centipede Canyon had been preempted and settled with wonderful rapidity, and the percentage of lawless bullies, usually incident to such sudden mushroom growth, was, very fortunately, remarkably small.

This blessing the people there had a sincere appreciation of and took good care to perpetuate, by serving timely notice on any one of that class who put in an appearance with a view of staying.

The DeKalb mill had been built and had thrived exceedingly, and—to use a slang phrase, the owner "had coined lots of tin."

Moultrie and Bertha had kept up a constant correspondence, and now, as a result, the westward emigration fever had seized upon Mrs. Poinsett.

In 1860, if any one had suggested to her that conducting a hotel in a territory, was a sphere in which a lady of taste and refinement would shine, she would have retorted :

"Yes, a lady of masculine traits." Now Presto !

Whether the arguments of Moultrie, coming second hand to her through Bertha, or the reflection of maturer years alone, or both combined had changed her views, no one undertook to decide. No mortal could tell.

That they were changed is evident by the following letter, "slip" she called it, in Bertha's answer to "*your last*,"—from Moultrie.

Moultrie in this "*last*" had dwelt with some length on the wish of his uncle to sell the hotel at the mines to him, as his other largely increasing business absorbed all his time, and carried him for protracted periods to distant points, during which time the management was not satisfactory.

In fact, he had not at any time intended to play the rôle of Boniface, but had originally established the hotel simply for the accommodation of his employes and such other persons as came that way to do business with him.

His store had also been established for the same purpose.

"I'm not cut out for a shopkeeper," he had repeatedly said to his nephew, and as Moultrie had a perfect passion for the calling, the entire management had eventually been transferred to him.

And it did seem marvelous the success with which he, so young and inexperienced, conducted the business.

Freighters, after having in vain tried to supply their wants at other stores on the trail, never failed to find at Centipede Canyon all they were in need of.

Everything under the sun that could possibly be

called for was in stock, some things sometimes stale, but there all the same, and as fresh as could be expected.

Fine goods and coarse goods, and choice and common wares, alike, filled the shelves and drawers of Moultrie's establishment. Everything for householders, office and shop, doctors, lawyers, cowboys, and farmers.

After his advent there, army officers and their wives did not have to send away off to some large city in civilization for choice perfumes and fancy articles.

Centipede Canyon always had them.

At the time Mrs. Poinsett sent her "slip," the place had grown into a thriving town, with a post-office, court-house, two churches, one Protestant, the other Catholic, and a schoolhouse.

A bank, with an opera house upstairs, showed where people could wisely fund and foolishly spend their money.

Moultrie thought he would like to take the hotel, enlarge and thoroughly renovate and re-equip it, and conduct it on shares, if he could get a desirable manager or *manageress*. The income from it was splendid.

A good hotel, *competently* managed, he clearly saw would prove a small bonanza. He wanted this one "a bonanza."

Mrs. Poinsett's "slip" had said:

"About that hotel at the mines, I have been thinking that it would be a field in which one, *even a lady*, after years of comparative inaction, might find some *healthy friction* to divert attention from unpleasant retrospection." Precious, *true* wife.

"Something to limber up one's mental hinges, so to speak, don't you know. Moultrie, dear, do you think a true woman *can* be unwomanly?

"Then there would be constant occupation, too, and such sights, you know!" she continued.

"One could not find time to mope and brood over joyless reminiscences, for there would be no leisure

for it; besides, the air there is *so* bracing and healthy, if all your glowing accounts to Bertha are to be relied on, and I believe they are, for you were always the very personification of truth.

"I am a great coward, and really don't know what to think or do, but have lately become 'possest'—(only that archaism will express my meaning)—'*possest*' of a longing desire to undertake some such an enterprise. Don't laugh at me, now! it is true, honestly true. I believe I could bring some pretty good management to bear in my favor, so far as the household part is concerned, but probably I would make a poor stick in everything else.

"Yet I don't care! I won't beat around the bush! I will say at once, since you speak of a *manageress*, which means a woman, of course, that if I will suit, and you will make the arrangements to get me out there, I will go into that hotel myself, if it does not cost too much." Woman all over, "if it does not cost too much."

"I would like to try the novelty of the thing.

"I have been to St. Louis since first thinking of it, and learned I could raise $10,000 on my property there, and I must save my cash in bank for Bertha.

"I would wish to reserve my farm and village property here, to fall back on, in an emergency.

"I have two or three trustworthy people in mind, to whom I could let them at good rental.

"This, now, is my *business* answer to your advertisement in Bertha's letter. What do you think of it?"

It is needless to add that it was just what Moultrie had wanted all along.

When it arrived at Centipede Canyon he was away on a protracted trip, completing arrangements for his new ventures at the Indian stations and military posts, heretofore referred to. He was gone more than two months, traveling in his own prairie carriage, and was accompanied by Fatty Forbush, whose newspaper enterprise had proven unsuccess-

ful, and who had finally arranged to look after Moultrie's interests at one of the new stores.

The carriage was drawn by four fine, hardy mules, that could average seven miles an hour daily, for eight or ten hours, over good prairie roads.

Besides the driver, Moultrie was accompanied by a bright colored boy, a sort of cook and valet combined, and a tall, sinewy Mexican.

Both these personages were mounted on stout mustang ponies, with no end to their power of endurance. The Mexican was an expert in live-stock affairs, and superintended all of Moultrie's speculations in that line. He was his companion on this trip for the purpose of looking about and reporting his observations in that line, in the new country to which they were going.

Señor Ysleta, that was his name, was a stately representative of his swarthy and proud race, and was about six feet in height, and in his close-fitting riding suit, looked slight in build.

His eyes, eyebrows, moustache and hair were as black as midnight.

He was as straight as an arrow, active and graceful, and possessed the strength of a giant.

His mother, of pure Castilian blood, had died in his early boyhood, and his father had subsequently wandered from their beautiful home, (under the very shadow of the halls of the Montezumas, and facing perennially snow-capped mountains) and had finally, in the wilds of New Mexico, fallen in love with and married a beautiful Navajo maiden, whose affectionate nature had won his heart, and in whose loving arms he at last had died from a dozen cruel wounds, inflicted by a party of her tribe, that had fomented a quarrel and then beset and killed him in a brutal and cowardly manner.

Although the Don had linked his destiny with this beautiful Indian girl, he nevertheless, throughout all the varied scenes of his new life, clung passionately and sadly to the memory of the gentle

donna, Señor Ysleta's mother, with whom he had lived most happily in bygone decades.

The one great, soul-absorbing dream of his devoted son Gomez, was his ultimate meeting with that sainted mother at some future period, amid a halo of glory, in a blissful beyond, far more brilliant and gorgeous than the entrancing scene he remembered so vividly, when the blazing sun, blue sky and snow-mantled mountain-tops in the background, shone above his beautiful birthplace nestling in a green valley of tropical luxuriance.

In front lay the quaint old city Mexico, and the embattled heights of Chepultepec.

Solomon Dilyard (or "Sol," as he was generally called), the colored valet, although black, was "true blue."

So at least thought Moultrie and Gomez Ysleta.

He was beyond the shadow of a doubt, thoroughly loyal to his master and that master's best interests.

He had been in Moultrie's employ twenty months, and his honesty, fidelity, and gratitude for considerate treatment, gave the lie to that croaking sentiment, prevalent with some people, which pronounces the African race ungrateful, or else, proved him to be a shining exception to the rule.

Some two years previous he had engaged to accompany an officer of the army from a Western city to a remote frontier garrison. The promise of good wages had been a great inducement. Subsequently, on account of some disagreement, he had been confined, on bread and water, several days in a military guard-house, and afterward had been turned out, houseless and homeless on the prairie, without money or friends.

Starting toward the rising sun, early one morning, and catching up with an overland wagon train, he had begged permission to accompany it toward the States, promising to make himself as useful as he could in consideration therefor.

Such was his story when, half starved and nearly

frozen, he presented himself, a pitiable looking object, at De Kalb's store and asked for food and work.

He was willing "to do anything," he said, to earn money enough to pay his way back to his home. He was employed, and his willingness and activity gave much satisfaction.

Moultrie, one day, called him aside and said:

"A train for the States will pass here within a week, and if you wish I will arrange for you to go with it, and work your way in. This will enable you to keep your wages as a stake to begin business with when you get home. They amount to nearly a hundred dollars and you being a pretty good barber could buy an outfit and start a barber-shop with three-fourths of it, if you only manage right. I would rather have you stay and work for me, however, if you had just as leave."

"Sol" hesitated. One hundred dollars, all his own, to shake under the noses of those who had been his more prosperous neighbors of his race, at his old home, and who had called him—

"A pooah niggah, worf nuffin in de worl—" was a grand inducement to go—a great temptation.

"Wait a little, Massa De Kalb," he replied.

"As *you* say sometimes, let me sleep ober it."

"Very well, Sol," Moultrie responded, "sleep over it, and let me have your answer to-morrow."

The next day Sol unbosomed himself wholly to his employer, assuring him he did so—

"Only kase, massa," said he, "yo is de honestisest gemman I eber seed."

Moultrie pointed out the emptiness of the satisfaction he thirsted for, and told him he would be worse off than ever when his money was gone. He would be tempted to squander it foolishly, and would yield to the temptation, spite of himself. Sensible people would despise him all through and, in the end, he would be looked on more than ever as tri-

fling, and finally he would be disgusted with himself."

"Why not wait,"

Moultrie continued, "until you can take *several* hundred home, which you will be perfectly able to do, in a couple of years, if you save up as you have in the past few months, and continue to put in odd hours, on shares with McBride.

"Mac believes in you; he tells me he would trust you with anything, and that is saying a great deal for you, because he has a very poor opinion of colored people generally."

Talk like this soon settled the matter and Dilyard promised to remain, "for awhile," at least.

That "awhile" had run on up to the present time.

Two fine saddle horses, fully accoutered, one led and one driven, and a pair of extra mules, trotted along with the rest of the outfit.

CHAPTER XIV.

MOULTRIE IN THE ROLE OF PROTECTOR.

A FEW weeks before Dilyard had thus engaged himself permanently to De Kalb, a new mail route and stage line had been established, which passed Moultrie's store, going north and south, and a coach arrived from each direction on alternate days. This line connected Centipede Canyon with the garrison from which Dilyard had been expelled, and the very first stage that came, after the day on which the conversation just mentioned occurred, contained the army officer and wife who had shown the inhumanity to this friendless colored boy, alleged by him.

The gentleman was about five feet, ten inches in height, neither stout nor thin, somewhat stoop-shouldered, and had a crabbed, half-fierce expression, which he evidently assumed, and which he fancied was one of dignified sternness, befitting him as a U. S. A. officer.

He seemed possessed of an overweening desire to impress on people his identity as an army officer and a sense of his official importance.

In fact, he made himself, at times, ridiculous in this direction, and it was plain to see he was not educated, nor a man of innate refinement or possessed of any claims to culture. All that there was that was of real gold about him, was his gold repeater.

His eyes were a cold blue, and numerous "crow's tracks" betrayed a life of dissipation, or hard service and incessant worry, for he was manifestly too young to have those tell-tale wrinkles righteously charged to old age.

His moustache was red and of thick growth.

He was not what one would call a bad-looking man, and, save his evidently cultivated sour expression, which, from the fact that it was cultivated, betrayed a weak point, he might, save for this, which made him repulsive, have passed muster as being tolerably good looking. That is, good looking enough to be endured on the score of looks.

There was in his laugh a rasping, disagreeable nasal ring, and he had a habit of bending forward and doubling up, when hilarious, that impressed you unpleasantly.

He was predisposed to bullyism, was oblivious of the fact, and did not appear like a man cautious people would be likely to trust.

And he possessed, it was charged by his intimate comrades even, a remarkable faculty for getting control of other people's property, which he squeezed more profit out of than the rightful owners were ever able to extract, if fortunate enough, at any

time, to get it safely back into their own hands again.

He was unpopular, both in and out of the army.

His wife was taller than he was. Her eyes were very large and of a pale blue—very pale. And her face was freckled, broad and angular, with high cheek bones, and decidedly clammy looking, as if the colorless skin was sticky.

It was what some people call a " platter " face.

She was large boned, her hair was red, and she wore her dresses too short, as if still a school-girl at forty odd years.

They were in fact just long enough for a school-girl of fifteen, but not long enough for a matron of unmentionable age.

Their scanty length did not make her look a day younger, and served only to emphasize *the area of her feet*.

The whole expression of her features betokened a hot temper, the possession of which she gave ample evidence of before the stage, after stopping awhile that day, resumed its eastward trip.

It came about in this fashion :

She was standing in Moultrie's store, leaning against the rough counter, little dreaming that Solomon Dilyard was a trusted employe on the premises, when he entered with a basket of eggs and vegetables, a broad grin on his black face at some parting joke of McBride's.

The transition to an expression of astonishment and fear when he saw Mrs. Blondin, was ludicrous in the extreme, and her surprise and sudden anger also appeared more comical than serious.

The two stood gazing at each other in silence for several seconds.

Sol's lower jaw quivered perceptibly.

His eyes seemed popping from their sockets, and his stare was riveted on her face, like one in a trance of terror.

She bestowed on him a withering look, as if she

would annihilate him with a glance from her faded but fiery eyes, and her head was thrown back and poised loftily, while her bosom rose and fell with profound excitement.

"So!" she exclaimed at last, in a tone of concentrated rage.

"You are here, are you? How dare you remain in this part of the country?"

Then turning to Moultrie, who, just entering the nearer door had stopped, with a look like an interrogation point, as he viewed the singular tableau, she said:

"Is this colored boy employed here, sir?"

"He is, madame," replied Moultrie, politely lifting his hat.

"You will do me a favor then if you will discharge him," she imperiously added.

"I brought him to this country and have some rights in the matter."

"Did he work for you any length of time?" asked Moultrie quietly, closely scanning her.

"Yes, five months."

"Why not longer."

"Because we discharged him."

"Perhaps he was negligent or dishonest?"

"We discharged him for good and sufficient reasons," she responded, somewhat haughtily.

"And from that hour you ceased to have any claim on him, if I correctly understand the case," said Moultrie politely.

"He has been efficient and reliable while in my employ, and I cannot dispense with his services.

"Get a chair from the office for the lady," he added, turning to Sol, "and then take that basket to Aunty, and tell her to hurry up with dinner. I'm famished."

Saying which he walked on behind the counter and down its length into his office, passing Sol on the way, whom he quietly told:

Not to be afraid, as she could do him no harm, and he would see she did not.

Which assurance lifted a heavy load off the boy's heart and brought a grin of relief to his troubled face.

"I'se not gwine to be afeared, Massa DeKalb, after you say dat," he answered.

"Keep out of her sight," was Moultrie's parting rejoinder.

Major Blondin entered the store at this moment, on his return from a stroll up the river with another passenger eastward bound.

Although the elaborate advantages that had been taken of the natural situation here, had invested Moultrie's store and its surroundings with widespread notoriety, and although the place was regarded as a sort of beautiful oasis in the wilderness, where that unusual luxury in that region, a good meal, could always be depended on, these two gentlemen were surprised, greatly beyond their expectations, at what they discovered, and they regarded the place as a perfect little paradise in a desert center.

Under a shelving rock, over which fell a miniature cataract, McBride had constructed a receptacle for his milk pans, and had fitted up other cool recesses where fresh meats, vegetables, and jars of water could be kept at a constant very low temperature, in the hottest of the dog-days.

The garden was as complete as any in civilization, and destructive insects had signally failed to make any serious inroads because of his precautions and vigilance.

The vineyard, too, was a grand success, its tender age being considered, and promised to be still grander in the course of time.

The berry bushes and fruit trees were thriving remarkably well, and the poultry-yard and duck-pond were models of their kind, well worthy of imitation in more civilized and better favored localities.

The dam below the fishing area had been successfully built, and platforms with awnings had been erected at convenient points, enhancing the pleasure of piscatorial pastime by the lazy ease afforded, as well as the protection from sun and mud provided.

Major Blondin was engaged in loudly proclaiming his lively appreciation of all these points, as he entered the store, and caught sight of the expression on his wife's face.

One of belligerency and defiance immediately mounted his own in return, for he had encountered that look before.

It occurred to him that he might perhaps have done wrong in viewing these astonishing improvements without her, but he could not be held reponsible justly, for he had asked her to go with him before he started, and she had pleaded fatigue and had declined.

There was nothing else he had done, that he knew of, to cause that expression, and she could "fire away as soon as she wanted to," he said mentally, he would "give her as good as she sent."

Like a flash, these thoughts passed through his mind, and like a flash they were dissipated, when, the next moment, he saw Sol coming toward his wife with a chair.

"Well, I declare! Where did *you* come from!" he exclaimed sharply, a cruel gleam in his baleful, despotic eye.

"You seem to be at home here."

"I belongs heah, sah." Sol answered, in a scared voice.

"Oh! you do, eh!" he answered. "You're a sweet-scented thing to belong anywhere! Didn't I order you to go back to St. Louis?"

"He's as good as those that employ him, I reckon!" remarked Mrs. B——, quite loudly, as though expecting to excite approval from the grin-

ning spectators, who now thronged the store. There was a large wagon train in camp near by.

"Of course one cannot expect anything like decent breeding from some people!" and she looked daggers toward Moultrie's office door.

Meanwhile Sol had placed the chair for her, and had started back hastily toward the office.

"Come here, you black scoundrel!" said the Major, stepping toward him.

I can't deed, an' deed I can't, I'se got my work to do!" Sol replied, terror-stricken as he disappeared on the run.

"What an impudent rascal!" exclaimed the Major.

"Oh! they encourage him in it *here!*" said madame emphasizing the word "*here.*"

"If I had him at the fort I'd put him on bread and water for a week!" declared the thoroughly exasperated husband, hunching his back and drawing in his abdomen disagreeably. He always looked like a hunch-back when mad.

His eyes were flashing angrily as he strode after Sol, whom he overtook in Moultrie's office, where he was nervously brushing his master's coat, as an excuse to linger near.

"So, you don't propose to obey when I order?" the Major demanded savagely, seizing him by the shoulder roughly.

"Please don't, Massa! You hurt!" exclaimed the affrighted fellow, in accents of pain and terror, for the officer's grip was like a vice.

"What is the matter, what does this mean?" questioned Moultrie springing to his feet. He saw, at a glance, that the officer had been drinking. "These are my private rooms, sir!"

"It means that this black rascal would not come to me when I ordered him to!" was the hot, brutal reply.

"And why should he, if he did not want to?" asked Moultrie.

"Because I called him!" was thundered back.

"Well, that is no reason at all, sir, and besides, he was busy with my work and perhaps expected violence at your hands, possibly. He is my servant, sir, and you have no claim on him and no business here.

"You'll please release him, sir. I shall protect him. And get out of this room and stay out."

"The devil you say!" was the only response with a sneer.

Just then, by a sudden downward jerk, Sol released himself and darted for the doorway opening into the corral.

Simultaneously, it was darkened by the splendid figure of Senor Ysleta, into whose arms Sol rushed, pellmell, before he could help himself.

The Major, with blazing eyes and clenched fist, followed close after, and was on the point of dealing the boy a blow, when, with a graceful, quick sweep of his sinewy arm, the Mexican pushed aside his hand, and exclaimed.

"Halt, el capitaine! do not disgrace your noble uniform and yourself by striking this helpless boy!" and he stepped aside to let Sol pass out.

Blondin! Why not co-associate blackguard with the name! Oh!—said more than one, Oh! if only some of the *truly* brave *gentlemen*, who are a real honor to the uniform, if only some of them had been there then, to wipe out this brutal quack and monkey caricature of the real, honorable, *truly honorable* gentlemen of the United States army? wipe him up, *for aye*, as a self protection of their generally recognized and honestly merited high respectability. Veritably he—Blondin, was one of the black sheep—one of the black specks on an otherwise faultlessly white mantle.

Was Blondin a born blockhead or a knave, or much of both, and blind to the fact?

Could he not in the tiniest bit, see himself as others saw him? No, it would seem not.

As a poker player he was a blooming success, and, whether at early morn or late at eve, he always rose from the table with a "good round capon of *chips*" to be cashed by the banker, and which, generally, younger officers had to pay.

Think of the disgrace of it! Only a few months earlier this same stalwart Mexican, Ysleta, had disarmed Blondin, and had thrown the pistol he had wrenched from his hand, out into the street.

"Stand aside, you infernal meddlesome greaser!" Blondin yelled. "This is the second time you have thrust your infernal self across my path!"

Ysleta heeded him not but stood immovably, blocking the doorway.

"This has gone quite far enough," said Moultrie, trembling with excitement. "Please leave my premises at once, sir!"

"Certainly," responded Blondin—"and with pleasure, for you seem cut out as a fit companion only for greasers and niggers!"

"If you are the gentleman you pretend, sir, you will then hurry yourself, or I will be forced to kick you out!" was Moultrie's hot rejoinder.

It was a bold, rash, reckless remark, born of towering indignation and decidedly unsafe, for the other man was at least fifty pounds heavier than Moultrie, and already thoroughly infuriated besides.

The words were scarce uttered before Moultrie received a stinging blow on his mouth that sent him, reeling, against his desk. But the striker, almost at the same moment, was stretched senseless on the floor by a well directed one from Senor Ysleta.

The Mexican was a heavier and taller man than the officer, and took him as unexpectedly as the latter had taken young De Kalb.

CHAPTER XV.

MOULTRIE'S MODEL TRAVELING OUTFIT.

THE two extra mules with Moultrie's party were each saddled with a Mexican pack and pair of leather panniers. These contained, besides several buffalo robes, some rubber over-clothing and a number of good, old-fashioned comfortable wraps and pillows and blankets, two large tent flies, and an outfit of sectional-jointed tent poles, for shelter from rain and dew, or shade from the hot rays of the sun, when in camp.

It was about two P. M., and from a warm, even sultry, morning, the sky had become heavily overcast with threatening clouds that mustered in frowning battalions, too close to the earth to inspire the hope that nature was merely showing an empty "bluff," for when they ride so low over those broad treeless plains, they are generally full-pent with a deluge soon to empty itself.

So heavily water-freighted are these storm-clouds, usually, at that season, that rivers and creeks receiving the rainfall that pours down on the watersheds they drain, will, in a few hours, fill to overflowing, and in some cases, from dry beds become roaring, rushing torrents, impassable for days.

Such a stream crossed the trail Moultrie was following, just fifteen miles ahead, and the importance of placing it behind them before night set in was fully appreciated by the travelers.

From its opposite bank the ground rose gradually, almost imperceptibly, (with now and then a long undulation) for thirty-five miles, to where the altitude reached an elevation of nearly two thousand feet above its bed. Every inch of the way was prairie, excepting a narrow fringe of cottonwood trees that skirted the edge of the stream ahead.

Passing over this long, high divide, they would enter on a still longer rolling slope, whose rocky fissures and deep ravines, scantily wooded, were, in wet seasons, the beds for madly rushing little torrents, tributary to the broad, shallow river that meandered through the lowlands some forty miles still further on.

The road over this route was unexceptionally good, save in the bottom-land, close along the border of the distant stream.

Here on a long, low sand ridge, in a cottonwood grove, an old trapper had built a ranch, and gathered about him a mongrel following, principally Mexicans, semi-civilized Indians, and negroes.

Of the fifteen or twenty at this time in his "outfit," there was only one white man beside himself, and he, with an ugly cicatrice, from a bowie-knife slash that had severed his cheek its entire length, had a repulsive appearance that was not improved by chronic sore eyes and a badly pock-marked visage.

"The old trapper," as Morrison the head of this gang styled himself, was not exclusively in that line of business.

Besides his traffic in pelts, his horses, mules and cattle dotted the river bottom over an extensive range for fifty miles up and down the stream.

He was about six feet in height, had blue eyes, long, light colored hair and beard, and remarkably small feet.

His countenance was amiable looking and, except when on a debauch and maddened with liquor, he was as genial as could be desired.

He had left his wife in Missouri, after one of a series of bitter disagreements; and at this ranch had as housekeeper a large, fine looking woman, who had emigrated from a more thickly settled section for the benefit of that section and to escape the clutches of the law.

In fact she was now living under an assumed

name, and, because of complicity in certain criminal transactions in her past career in civilization, it behooved her to keep her identity and place of sojourn concealed.

Of the Mexican, Indian and negro employes very little of interest can be said. One by one, some of them had dropped off from overland trains and cattle herds, and some had wandered down there from Missouri or Arkansas, as many other persons wander from their homes in search of adventures and fortunes.

One colored man was a runaway Indian sla from the Choctaw Nation in the Indian Territory.

He was a very Goliah in stature and strength, and was known as "Toyoh Sam."

"We must cross the creek soon if we expect to cross it at all inside of ten days," said Moultrie to Ysleta.

"Si, Senor."

Responded the Mexican.

"This rain is not of one day but many I think."

And he gave the lead team a cut with his whip which started them ahead on the jump.

"Let them go!" exclaimed Moultrie to the driver, who was about reining in to bring them down to a trot.

"It is pouring down like the very furies ahead, and two hours of such a storm will set the creek booming."

"There, keep them steady at that," he added, as the animals came down of their own accord to a brisk, striding trot.

The little party had made about five miles of the distance when the rain burst in a torrent over them.

Not, however, before they had fished out from under the seats their rubber leggins and water proof overcoats and put them on.

The carriage curtains, too, had been securely buckled down, and as a result no inconvenience was experienced by the occupants from the terrific

storm, save the semi-darkness that overspread the sky, and the blinding effect of the rain that came in such great, thick sheets as to shut out everything from view over a hundred yards away.

On they plunged, nevertheless, and reaching the creek the carriage followed the horseman across the ford, just in the nick of time.

Had they been thirty minutes later, the swelling stream would have been too deep, and their animals, when midway, would have been lifted from their feet and swept down the swift current to destruction.

"Let us camp on high ground, Señor," said Ysleta to De Kalb, and he began gathering pieces of wood for fuel, from the dead branches lying near.

"Up above, half a mile off the road, is a good place, a hundred feet higher than this, and near the water; you can see it, there," he continued, pointing it out.

"Very well, drive on! We must have good grass, too, for the stock," said Moultrie, nodding to Ysleta and smiling. And then, speaking to his driver, they turned off the road and went to where the Mexican had indicated.

This was on a ridge, cleft by the channel of the creek, whose banks, at this point, were almost perpendicular, as though a slice had been cut out of the solid rock to afford a passage for the stream. Here grazing was excellent on the hill-side, an abundance of wood was obtained from a clump of stunted trees, and Dilyard, notwithstanding the rain, soon had a fine fire blazing, protected by a large oil-cloth *talma* stretched overhead like a tent fly.

It was several feet down to the water from the edge of the bank, and the faithful descendant of Ham obtained a supply of that necessary article by fastening his camp kettle to a lariat rope, and lowering it into the rapidly rising stream.

Meanwhile the other men with the expedition had unlashed the poles from the side bars of the carriage,

and opened out the tent flies, which were speedily erected into a cosy shelter, by means of simple rigging that had been devised by Moultrie.

One was put up close on one side of the carriage, to serve as a dining canopy. The other, fastened at one end, fore and aft to the carriage wheels, was stretched over its top and carried outward on the opposite side, where, at the other end, it was passed over a ridge pole six feet high and about eight feet from the vehicle and fastened, at intervals, by guy ropes, to several stout tent pins. This arrangement afforded effectual shelter from the rain for the carriage itself, as well as for the men under the ten by twelve feet of awning thus furnished.

A sheet iron camp-stove soon dissipated the prevailing damp, as far as that was possible under the circumstances, and in less than an hour, Dilyard, spry as a cat, having unfastened from the trunk-rack the pieces, and put together the camp table, invited them to a bivouac dinner of steaming hot bread, baked potatoes, fried ham, stewed tomatoes, olives, chowchow, marmalade and good Java coffee. Moultrie said it was "a damp, good feast, fit for the Gods!"

They had keen appetites, these travelers, to enjoy the inviting spread, and many words of commendation for the cook.

It was black night before they rose from the table, and the darkness was intense, but the wind, having died out entirely, candles could be lighted and did good service as auxiliaries to the two lanterns in their kit. And with their help, Moultrie and Fatty made their bed of rubber ponchos, Mackinaw blankets, and buffalo robes on the grass, under the awning with their feet toward the stove.

Gomez Ysleta spread his "couch" under the carriage, while Dilyard and the driver went "snooks" in utilizing the dining-room for the same purpose.

The rain continued to pour, pour, pour, in a ceaseless blinding torrent, until long after midnight. But

the next morning the sky was clear the sun shone forth with his usual uncurtained splendor and warmth, and all nature looked refreshed and joyous.

Innumerable birds filled the air and sang their carols, and the thin border of trees along the swollen stream seemed peopled by them. The faint odor from the wet untrod grass, the unobstructed view in every direction, and the protection from observation afforded by the joyous little nook, the verdure clad dell in which they were hidden, were all themes for prayerful thanks. So at least wrote Moultrie to Bertha.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SNUG CAMP AND STORMY NIGHT.

THE little party were in no hurry to proceed, for they well knew it would be impossible, if the deluge had been as great in that vicinity as it had been with them, to get beyond Morrison's ranch until the swollen river had receded. And it would also be far more pleasant to remain, at least one more night, where they were, because it would rest the animals on most desirable hillside grazing, where the grass was exceptionally succulent and abundant, and themselves on a fresh and romantic camping ground where no one had recently camped before, and where none of the objections of the ranch surroundings, none of the offal and filth, would offend.

Ysleta coincided heartily with Moultrie and Forbush, when the idea was suggested for his opinion.

"Our animals will rest much better here,"

He said.

"The grass is untrod and the air is pure. Besides,

we can rely on the water, which is of doubtful cleanliness at the other place. I should say camp here until we feel certain we can cross the river, and then go first a little over the divide, so that next day we can push on several miles beyond the ranch before we camp again, the further the better."

The Mexican was suspicious of Morrison's people, but had never before intimated the fact quite so directly. His remark, however, had excited Moultrie's curiosity, and that young man called for an explanation.

"I know nothing personally of the gang,"

Ysleta answered.

"But I have heard much that would induce me to shy clear of them always. I am glad even that the rain has wiped out our trail from the crossing to this point, for I intended, if you had given the order to harness, to advise that it be, not for the purpose of going on, but rather to move two or three miles farther up the creek, to a more secluded camp.

"I believe those fellows are cut-throats. And if they suspected our presence here, or dreamed there was anything like the sum of money you carry in the party, either disguised as Indians or in some other way, they would be down on us.

"If we wait, however, in an out-of-the-way place, until we are sure we can cross the river, the second day on the road we can easily reach the soldiers in camp, a few miles beyond Morrison's."

"I think your idea excellent, superb!" Moultrie said.

"And while the others are hitching up to move to the new, safer camp, suppose we ride forward and look for such a spot as you suggest."

And they rode forward, passing several places more or less desirable, until they finally arrived at one so beautiful and so perfectly fitted to their purpose, that both broke forth, simultaneously, in exclamations of surprise and pleasure.

The more they examined it the better they were satisfied.

It was a huge, oblong pocket, quite high up in the lovely range of hills, close to the creek, that was reached by a short, winding, rocky path, which abruptly terminated at the butt of a huge tree. Its broad-spreading and overhanging branches leaned far out over the stream that rushed, madly on, some twenty feet below.

These branches formed a perfect screen, shutting off completely and effectually hiding from sight this charming spot, especially from the opposite bank. That bank was low, completely flooded and covered with a dense thicket of undergrowth—a *chaparral.*

From nowhere save overhead could anything be seen inside this tiny glen. And from nowhere outside could it be entered, except at the particular point where Moultrie and Senor Ysleta had penetrated, unless you had wings and could descend into it from skyward like a bird.

Above, on the side upstream and two-thirds around, as though chopped away by the hand of man, great masses had been cut perpendicularly from the high ground encircling it, leaving a natural wall, like a vertical scarp on the outer face of the hills, as towering and inaccessible as the battlements of a medieval castle.

Inside the pocket was a level area, about half an acre in extent, reaching out and up everywhere (save at the narrow entrance) to the hillsides, that sloped gently until they suddenly terminated at this perpendicular face.

Scrubby little trees grew here and there, near and at the top of these slopes, and at one point from which a person could overlook the country for miles around, there was a comparatively large one with several of smaller growth so grouped as to form a complete shelter or screen, shielding the watcher there thoroughly from outside observation.

Any amount of well seasoned wood lay around in

small and large branches easily gathered, and as I have intimated before, water could be had in abundance conveniently, and without any possibility of exposure to detection by any prowler in the neighborhood, unless he actually penetrated through the hills and within the cosy retreat, and then walked down the devious path to the old tree overhanging the stream.

"We will post a sentinel there," said Moultrie, pointing to the clump.

"Since you have such a poor opinion of Morrison and his men we must do so. And we'll keep up a constant watch, each of us taking his turn.

"We will do this also as a precaution against Indians, or other undesirable visitors, although I hav'n't the least apprehension of any one coming, especially any scalp-hunting interlopers.

"We are too far away from their base, and there are too many troops in this part of the country.

"We may look for that sort of danger further on."

Ysleta merely shrugged his shoulders and smiled.

The carriage wound its way up the creek, making a wide detour to avoid the small ravines and broken irregular ground along the bank.

Ysleta put spurs to his horse, galloped to the high ground, and after a hasty survey, waved his hat to the driver as a signal to approach, and then hastened toward him, in order to pilot the team by the best route to the spot.

This was easily accomplished in due time, and a subsequent scanning of the surrounding country from the aerial outlook, through his powerful field glass, plainly disclosed to Moultrie the trail to Morrison's ranch, traversing the prairie like a slender tendril reaching out through a sea of grass, for some far distant and invisible something beyond.

This road or trail, as it was called in those parts, was not perceptible to the naked eye from where Moultrie stood, although any team, man or animal, passing over it, could have been clearly seen. And

Ysleta could have told whether he was bandit, Indian, tourist, soldier, cowboy, tramp, or scientific prowler.

"We will watch that, and protect legitimate explorists," said Moultrie to Gomez, pointing out the "Morrison trail."

"And you must make a circuit, and meet any one who may happen to be coming from the direction of the river, and inquire as to its stage.

"Anyone that you observe on the trail after to-day, I mean. Especially protect those scientific fellows, and invite them here.

"The rise of the water may not have been so very considerable there, after all, for now that I think of it, the storm seemed to originate on this side, and near here, and traveled away from instead of toward the river," continued Moultrie.

"I hope so," said Ysleta.

The little party remained in their delightful, new camp all that day and until three o'clock on the afternoon of the next, when they learned through Ysleta, from passing cattle herders, that the river had been impassable for only five hours, was fordable now, and was falling rapidly.

The team was therefore quickly harnessed, and the journey resumed, the extra animals being properly accoutred by Ysleta.

About eight in the evening, after having gone several miles, the carriage pulled off to the right of the road, and came to another standstill close to a clump of bushes near the head of a romantic-looking ravine, where enough water was found in a small pool from which to make coffee.

While at supper the sky again became suddenly overcast with angry clouds, and the wind rose considerably, whereupon Señor Ysleta advised that they "hook-up" and go on at once, driving leisurely, so as to reach the river by daylight, and cross before the coming storm could make the ford there impassable.

After a little discussion, it was finally decided to

let the animals graze on the fine *mesquit*, or "buffalo" grass, they were at the time enjoying so much, until about eleven o'clock P. M., at which time it was determined the journey would be resumed. But they were not destined to wait so long, for, before ten o'clock the rain was coming down in another blinding torrent, accompanied by a fierce gale, and it was deemed best to push on immediately, rather than continue on that high ground, exposed to the worst violence of the tempest without any compensating results. They were, therefore, soon under way again, and in for an unusually stormy and uncomfortable all-night ride.

Day was just breaking as they drew up in front of Morrison's main doorway, which was opened by that man's housekeeper, the only person about the premises stirring.

In fact, she was the only soul at the ranch, except "Toyo Sam," and a little, wiry-looking Mexican, about five feet tall, sick abed with the ague.

Toyo Sam's greeting of Ysleta was very cordial indeed. The latter seemed to regard it as effusive, and made several ineffectual efforts to escape.

"That colored Goliah seems very fond of you for some reason," remarked Moultrie, noticing it and smiling.

"Yes, I pulled him through when several others were dying of cholera once, and finally had to kill another man who wanted to kill him for some old grudge and his gold-dust hid in his waist-belt and seams of his Yankee store-clothes, and when he was too weak to defend himself, poor devil. It was four years ago, in a cattle camp down on the Rio Grande in Texas. I have seen him but once since, and that was when I came this way for you, a year ago, looking up this d—d military shop business, you have finally decided to undertake.

"I am glad he is here, however, for in case of any devilment, I believe I could depend on him. I am also glad all the remainder of the gang are away."

The river was quite low, considering the recent heavy rainfall, and lacked considerable of being too high to ford, but it was rising nearly half a foot an hour, and Moultrie therefore delayed only long enough to purchase some needed grain for the animals, after which he pushed forward and crossed in safety, taking Toyo Sam along, several miles, as a sort of voluntary escort or A. D. C.—from whom he learned that Morrison, with all hands, was out on what is called a "rounding up" of his cattle, and would not return in less than three or four days.

This was agreeable news, for Moultrie was widely known, and naturally would be suspected of having the considerable sum of money which he *did* have with him on this trip.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT LAST WITH TROOPS.

CONTINUING their drive, his party late that afternoon reached a cavalry camp of four "troops," pitched picturesquely between two forks of a well wooded and deep, rapidly running, but narrow stream with declivitous banks.

Here they found, under a large tent, a branch store of one of the firms Moultrie had become a partner in. And here they rested two days, during which time the animals were re-shod and grazed, and all needed supplies for the further journey ahead laid in.

Their destination was one hundred and twenty miles ahead, and the road thereto traversed a wild, rugged and dangerous country, without a single settlement, ranch or even cowboy camp on the way. Fort S——, at its end, was located in the midst of a

small, fertile, verdure-clad oasis, a veritable centre-piece of green grass and foliage in a sea of sand. The nine officers at the camp were genial, dashing fellows, Moultrie thought, all seemingly imbued with professional esprit, and each and all accorded him a hearty welcome. The commandant was particularly affable for one reputed austere and a strict disciplinarian. There was a peculiar light in his clear, blue-gray eyes, and a quietness and self-confidence and simplicity in his bearing that won Moultrie at once. Years later on it was averred that, had he lived, he would have compassed several valuable inventions—improvements in war implements—that would have revolutionized existing methods of attack and defence. His uncompleted experiments and models, found after his death, pointed out this conviction. Moultrie had been heralded as fabulously wealthy, and a most desirable accession to the coterie at the garrison he was en route for.

He was accredited as indomitable, handsome, remarkably enterprising, and lavish in his liberality. Anyone he liked had but to admire anything he could give and it was forthwith given. So rumor said.

His post-trader partner at the distant Fort S——, was anxiously awaiting him. A largely increased number of troops, depleted stock, and funds at low-water mark, accentuated the desire for his speedy arrival.

The post-trader's younger brother was manager of the branch store at the camp. He was plausibly altiloquent and gave circulation and emphasis to the flattering reputation of Moultrie that had preceded him. And being totally ignorant of this impression regarding himself, Moultrie, of course, thought his reception at camp as almost too effusive. But, on second thought, he attributed it to the inherent cordiality of his hosts, who, he argued, were overjoyed to see another white man among them.

He certainly did regard those officers he met then,

as the best fellows he had ever up to that time had the good fortune to fall in with. Their blunt, warm-hearted courtesies, and off hand manner won him completely.

He was at once made to feel himslf perfectly at home, and was invited to meet the commandant and others at dinner that evening, at the officers' mess-tent, and before the hour appointed had arrived was called on by all of them, among whom were two regarded as eccentric.

One, Lieutenant Beaustrum, was of middle-height, and, to use a nautical expression, of "great breadth of beam."

He wore short curls and very showy buckskin leggings. Had a clear, fair complexion, a broad Anglo-Saxon face, was partial to tight boots, used lavishly the rich but oppressive heliotrope perfume, and was a monomaniac on attitudinizing and using tremendously big words.

It was "a circus with all the side-shows thrown in," said one gentleman to a group of others,

"To see him strike a position at the 'beat off' of the band, when, as adjutant, he mounted the guard."

He had been, it was charged, more than once discovered posing in full uniform in front of his mirror, studying attitudes just before dress-parade.

His "valet" (as he called him) was a private soldier known in army nomenclature, among common soldiers, as "dog-robber." Because such as he wait on officers, and sit at the second table, eating (it is maliciously explained) what would otherwise be thrown to the dogs.

A "dog-robber," or "striker," as the officers term him, is usually paid about five dollars a month out of his private purse by the officer whose drudgery he does, in lieu of the military duty he has, as a further consideration, been excused from performing.

Some of them were very valuable servants, com-

petent to do anything well, from making boots and uniforms look immaculate to cooking a good meal.

Beaustrum's first name was Charley. Not Charles he insisted, but Charley, and he pronounced it as if spelled "*Chorley.*"

He had a heavy bass voice, thought he could sing charmingly, and had frequently, on occasion, roared most lustily at least, much to the discomfort of nervous persons in his immediate neighborhood.

He was always spruce and exceptionally neat, took excellent care of his teeth, put cosmetic on his moustache oftener than he said his prayers, constantly waxing the ends to a needle-like point, and never drank intoxicants.

All the officer's wives who had husbands addicted to this vice held him up as a model among men.

He was an acknowledged, decided success at cards, and uniformly held his own with any competitors at either "poker" or "blue Peter," the two games most played among army people on the Indian frontier. He was also a superb horseman.

Incur his displeasure and he could utterly squelch you under an avalanche of big words, quicker than you could say "Jack Robinson." And he was always strictly asyndeton in style, never using conjunctions in his speech when he could avoid them.

This, and the largeness of his words, in fact, were his stronghold, and the sledge-hammer way, yet ease, with which he swung and slung most ponderous dictionary quotations, in a relative sense, heavily discounted anything Vulcan and his whole corps of Cyclops ever undertook, or even dreamed of in their line.

One stormy morning in garrison, muffled in a mighty overcoat, he was, while returning from reveille roll-call, overtaken by a fresh young accession to the subalterns of his regiment in the person of a new fledged graduate, who accosted him cheerily, saying:

"Well, Charley, this beats the old Nick, don't it?

Turning us out on a morning like this; why didn't they "sound off" without the "assembly?"

"Chorley" swelled and towered like a Brobdignagian, so thought the youngster, and with a rush of blood to his face, and a look of lightning in his eyes, while his upraised, clenched fist seemed, Jove-like, to be holding a handful of thunderbolts, in mighty tones that struck his comrade dumb with amazement he roared:

"My prenomen, sir, is Chorley!

"I am no benighted Flat-head to be cognomened so flatly!"

"Give us some little culture in pronounciation, for decency's sake!

"You are just fresh from your books and should know how!

"C-h-a-r-l-e-y! Bah!"

Never was any innocent little child, in red drapery, more startled by a bellowing and frantic bull, than was this unintentionally offending "Sub."

Completely squelched and dejected, he hurried to his room, took a drink out of sheer chagrin, and turned in until breakfast-time for a little more of that sweet restorer of tired nature, sleep.

The other of the two gentleman who, in Moultrie's opinion, stood out, figuratively speaking, in bas-relief from the group around that festive banquet table,—for the dinner that evening was more like a banquet than anything else—was the very antipodes of "Chorley."

He was scant six feet in height and the kind of a man Great Caesar would not have liked, for, like Cassius, he was lean.

There was neither breadth of hips, depth of chest, nor width of shoulders to redeem this dashing young captain in personal appearance from the cause for adverse suspicion, given by that distinguished Roman Emperor in regard to the wily and treacherous lieutenant he so justly suspected.

Captain Gaunt also possessed some such a temper as Shakspeare credits Cassius with.

He believed only in armigerous people, was devotedly wedded to that belief, was very proud indeed of his profession, and at the same time despised what he termed "shop-keepers," by which he meant, all mercantile and commercial people.

He took most kindly to wine, fast horses and cards, was physically brave, recklessly so to a fault, but had a dried up, bleary-eyed and dissipated face, not pleasant to contemplate in one apparently so young.

The wrinkles and puffs around his eyes told their own sad story.

He was kind enough and sufficiently careful and attentive when sober, but exacting and cruel to those under his command when he was on a debauch.

"To be now a sensible man, and by and by a fool! Then presently a beast! O! every inordinate cup is unblest and the ingredient is a—devil!"

When he won at gaming, his company was fed on the fat of the land, when he lost, they complained of hard fare, or in other words, lived on regulation rations.

Writing or talking, he twirled one side of his blond moustache, which was thin and straggling, as if not rooted in arable soil.

When he was excited this twirling was done vigorously, and when quietly contemplative, slowly.

As a result that end twirled turned up and the end not twirled turned down, habitually.

Ten years of barber's art had been fruitlessly applied in endeavors to coax that moustache into a grown-up development. But it would not yield, any more than high living, abundance of fresh air and years of comparative idleness, would give the captain increased breadth of shoulders or put more meat upon his ribs; or any more than habitual gambling and small necessary expenses would put money in his purse.

To ride into stores on horseback, when in a convivial condition, was a favorite pastime with him, and was rather encouraged by some few small dealers, because the gallant cavalier never disputed their subsequent bills for damages.

At other times he would dress his colored servant in his own full regimentals, epaulettes, feathers and all, and have him, thus costumed, officiate as head-waiter at bacchanalian dinners, card parties, and orgies.

Many and various other things he would do, suggested by his surroundings at the time, which would come under the status of "disorderly conduct," before the police courts of cities, and yet his career was not curtailed, nor was anything like serious exception taken to his exploits by those in authority.

During his wildest sprees he *never* did anything dishonorable.

His record, on the score of moneys and public property in his charge, was stainless and flawless.

And whenever he dropped in on his fellow officers, engaged in having a good time, they would sing,

Oh! he's a jolly good fellow!" etc.

His company, in drill and discipline, was fully up to the standard, and his superior ability as an officer of his grade, and eligible for promotion to a higher, was unquestioned.

Furthermore, he was genial, companionable, and, from the standpoint of military gentlemen, "the soul of honor."

He was as devoted to his Scotch "dog-robber" as ever was officer to enlisted man. And, in the language of the latter, both considered "kickshaws" as "execrable."

The Scotchman was a tall, broad-shouldered, powerful soldier, who could tell, without end, the funniest of anecdotes, and tell them well.

And when the captain got what the faithful fellow called "harmfully drunk," he, with joke and jolly story, would concoct some sort of mixed drink that transformed him to the "harmlessly list," as he styled it, i. e., too far gone. And then most devotedly and incessantly he would nurse him until he returned to his normal condition when sober.

"If he tries any tantrums with me, I will promptly 'subjugate' him," he would say. And he did completely *quiesce* him.

He was the only person, officer or enlisted man, in the whole command, who could keep the captain in subjection when he had tippled to excess. And the only enlisted man Gaunt had ever met that he could not browbeat nor misuse.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FATTY FORBUSH SAVAGE ON ARMY OFFICERS.

MOULTRIE'S bed that night was made down on some packing cases in the store tent, and a soap-box, stood on end, served as a washstand, on which were a papier maché wash-bowl, a bucket filled with water, a quart tin cup, towels, soap, and a bottle of bay-rum.

The bed consisted of several buffalo robes and California-wool blankets spread out upon a piece of thick canvas,

"I think I will enjoy sleep hugely, to-night, and this looks very inviting."

He said, with a yawn, as he scanned the simple, but cosy arrangements.

"After one o'clock!"

Remarked Fatty, looking at his watch.

"How did you enjoy your first glimpse at army life on the frontier?"

"Oh, very well, on the whole; but I'm afraid it was somewhat disappointing in some respects."

Was the slowly-spoken answer.

"At least, it was not at all of the description I had fancied. These men are right jolly fellows. Ain't they, though?

"Separated from all restraining influences, and in this out-of-the-way locality, on a perilous kind of business, they must break the miserable monotony somehow. I haven't had a chance yet, perhaps, to see them only at their worst. Surely no opportunity to see them at their best." Moultrie had witnessed the first game of poker of his life.

"Yes, you have!" said Fatty, who had been repeatedly snubbed.

"They are the same everywhere, and these are good samples of our army officers, as I have seen them a hundred times.

"In garrison, in the presence of their ladies, some of them restrain themselves a little, and I believe there are instances where some drink *freely in* camp, who don't touch it at all when in garrison.

"My visits to different forts have been like going to different theatres in different cities.

"The actors, the stage mechanism, the scenery and other surroundings, have each time been pretty much the same in all the places.

"Although I know of a number of exceptions, still, as a rule, I have found army officers to be just what you saw them to-night. Either I have regularly, everywhere I have been, fallen in with an exceptionally bad lot, on exceptionally bad occasions, and in exceptionally bad places, or else my impression is correct.

"Furthermore, it is almost impossible to have yourself righted if you happen to be the victim of any fraud or outrage at the hands of one of them.

They will band together for each other or elude justice, if you get the law on them, in a way and with a success that must astound old Satan himself. There have been plenty of instances in which some of them have combined against one of their own number, and yanked him up at short notice, and in such cases some startling things are likely to come out, especially if he fights back very hard, gets a ghost of a show. I tell you what! in such a case it's worse than a lot of wolves rending a wounded brother of the pack, the ravenous way they do go for him.

"And they often do it with a show of virtuous indignation, too, especially those who are blacker sheep than the accused. But the real truth is they are generally after a vacancy and promotion, which one or more juniors in rank to the intended victim are hungering for.

"If you don't want to listen, don't, my dear boy, but, truthfully, I have actually met some—designing curs of course—who have actually been so despicable as to inveigle confiding comrades, to whom they were in debt for money squandered in gambling, into disgraceful sprees. And when everything was fixed, ripe for the success of their beastly, dirty scheme, they have had the soft-hearted fools take the tour of duty of some other ambitious confederate, and, at the right time in which to convince enlisted men and all other onlookers, he has been apprehended and charged as '*drunk on duty!*'"

"Outrageous! But it really doesn't interest me the least. Fully as mean and bad things are done every day and every hour in other professions and walks of life," said Moultrie. "I hope you don't overdraw, old boy."

"No, sir! I do not overdraw! If the regular army were a joint-stock concern," replied Fatty, persistently, brushing up his forelock till each hair stood erect, like a drum-major, "the controlling interest would be owned by less than three hundred families.

Talk about your syndicates and your trusts: why they are producers, anyhow, and not absorbers of production with no output to justify their existence. How's that for high?"

"You have evidently been a student of the subject, a close observer," said Moultrie, sleepily. "But come on: undress and let's turn in."

"In my newspaper work it behooved one to be a close observer," persisted Fatty, swelling with self-importance. "And," with arms akimbo, "I especially inquired into and sifted this particular matter, closely and exhaustively."

"Well, all right, I guess you did. Good-night, old fellow. The major has promised us a strong cavalry escort when we start out for the fort. Turn in."

And soon afterward both were wandering through dreamland: totally oblivious of and indifferent as to how the army was run, and not in the least concerned about imaginary or real stock-holders who owned it or anything else; as well as of those unfortunate fellows, who did not belong to the charmed circle who owned stock, and who had been or were destined to be "frozen out" by those who did. Four days of tedious and uneventful travel finally brought our little party to its destination, Fort S——.

It was just three o'clock in the afternoon when, dust-begrimmed and weary, they rounded the top of a long, rolling hill and came in sight of its numerous, white buildings, scattered over the long stretch of prairie spread out before them in the distance.

The steeply sloping, octagonal tin roof of the magazine shone, a dazzling blaze, like silvery sheen, in the rays of the unobscured sun.

It looked like a huge, royal gem crowning a sea of verdure. It was apart, some distance from the main buildings of the fort.

Off, to the right, was a long, low building, with several smaller ones grouped around it, in straight lines, and surrounded by a massive staunch looking stockade that was pierced by port-holes at regular

intervals, and supplied with open towers, or outlook platforms, at each corner, This group especially interested Moultrie, for it was the post-trader's establishment—his future headquarters.

A crowd of motley looking Mexicans, with burros packed with cord-wood, were congregated in front of the main building. And an empty army supply train, from a more distant garrison, was moving into park, off to the left and rear. Nearest to it were the rambling looking warehouses for the quartermaster and commissariat, and back of them was a line of cavalry stables and a long, narrow quartermaster's corral.

Further on was a row of soldiers' barracks, with a hospital at one end, removed a few yards only from a joint guard and prison house.

In front of these was a plaza, or parade ground, neatly kept, and over which squads and companies of troops could be seen, marching and countermarching in drill.

In that clump of willows in the back ground, to the right, is a large spring.

The water is as clear as crystal and so cold that fish cannot live in it.

The slender, serpentine, silvery thread that is lost to sight behind the bluff, on the left, is Willow Creek, that takes its rise from this spring.

Its bank, toward the garrison, is a pretty, gently sloping scarp, while the opposite bank is a steep and abrupt counter-scarp.

Directly opposite the soldiers' barracks, and aligning the other side of the parade ground were the cottages for officers, with broad verandahs screened with vines here and there, and pretty yards.

Between the two warehouses, about midway, stood a plain little "hackell" occupied as headquarters.

All these buildings were but one story high and the walls were of mud, or Mexican "adobe." All except headquarters, which was built of perpendicular logs.

The yards around the officers' cottages were not enclosed by fences, but by low earth walls in front, and high ones in the rear.

Numerous small out-buildings dotted the whole area, and near the stables were various shops for the garrison blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, etc., and several small houses close by these were used as residences by the artisans working in the shops, and the laundresses and other civilian employes.

Everywhere, everything, houses, fences and all were whitewashed; and, centered on the carpet of rich green that stretched far away on all sides, the fort seemed to stand out, in bas-relief, a thing of exceeding beauty when viewed from a distance.

It shone refulgently in its coat of gleaming white, with the tinned magazine roof flashing like a mammoth brilliant on its broad bosom.

This quaint, little octagonal, semi-subterranean building was, as before intimated, beyond the fort proper, isolated for obvious reasons. But viewed from the long, gently sloping hill, the approaching party was descending, it looked as if centered on its very heart.

The view in toto was exhilarating and beautiful. The polished gleaming bayonets and brass buttons of the soldiers danced and scintillated in the sunshine, emitting sparks and flashes innumerable.

In front of one of the pretty vine-trellised cottages, on the officers' line, a cavalcade of ladies and their escorts, were just mounting, to go out on a wolf hunt.

The road was so smooth and the carriage made so little noise, that the barking of the hounds as they ran hither and thither, in wild delight, impatient for the start, could be distinctly heard, and the scene was animating in the extreme.

Several prairie carriages were standing in front of the commanding officer's quarters, the only two-story building in the garrison, and everything had the appearance of unusual activity.

Quite a number of Mexican mustangs were tied to the hitching posts in front of the post-trader's store, and their owners were listlessly lolling in the shade.

Men, in gray shirts and broad sombreros, were at work repairing the treillage, and trimming and beautifying the espalier, at the east and west ends of the hospital.

Above, and in the very centre of all this busy spectacle, from the top of its towering mast, in the middle of that small sea of green, the parade ground, the great forty-four foot garrison flag floated proudly and gracefully in the breeze.

"What a garden spot of an oasis!" involuntarily exclaimed Moultrie.

"It certainly does look beautiful, down there," coincided Fatty, pointing to the fort.

"Si Señor, very pretty!" responded the tall Mexican, with a smile and a nod.

Beaustrum cantered up alongside the carriages and said:

"I forgot to tell you that negotiations for a treaty of peace are afoot, and I should not wonder if those carriages, in front of headquarters, had brought the commissioners from Washington."

"It looks very much like it."

"If so it should turn out, you will have a chance to see the biggest assemblage of the aristocracy of the plains that ever came together."

"I don't quite understand you," said Moultrie.

"Why, I mean all the head and lesser chiefs of these warlike red devils, who have been giving us so much trouble of late, will come in to attend a big council of peace. Then these infernal 'watch-fires,' and big smokes will cease."

"Well, for my part, I should think that you officers out here are better entitled to be styled 'The aristocracy of the plains,'" said Moultrie.

"Thank you," replied Beaustrum. "But, speaking of these Indians, there never have been more of them in it at any one time before. Yes, sir-ee!

This has been a big war. And, as a consequence, there will be the biggest peace powwow ever held in this country, and the biggest pile of scarlet strouding given away, that was ever given them before.

"Mirabile dictu! what has hit him?" mentally exclaimed Fatty.

And, afterward, when the team was driven on ahead of the cavalry, he explained himself.

"What a tumble Beaustrum did take!" he said to Moultrie.

"He did not use one solitary big word in his remarks to you, not one."

"Perhaps he thinks them beyond my comprehension," was the laughing response.

But, sure enough, Beaustrum was correct, so they learned on arrival at the garrison.

The great Indian peace commission had arrived from Washington, and arrangements were already in vigorous progress to establish, without delay, a system of estafette couriers, connecting all forts, camps, and Indian agencies, with the garrison, as soon as possible.

Soldiers, scouts, interpreters, and friendly Indians, were to be utilized in this direction.

Orders had been promulgated to communicate, as soon as possible, to all hostile chiefs and tribes, the message of peace from the "Great Father in the big white lodge at Washington."

So Moultrie was promised an unexpected treat.

He would be present at the greatest Indian council of peace ever held in the history of the country, and would see and shake hands with the fiercest and greatest of the red warriors of the plains.

Nothing in this description would impress the reader with the idea that this place was really a *fort*, as forts are generally understood to be.

There were no battlements, no rampart, no parapet with frowning cannon peering out through narrow embrasures, or standing guard en barbette, and

no line of circumvallation, save the spotlessly white walls of earth that enclosed the cottage yards.

Yet it was a true type of an American fort on the Indian frontier. Many others were more, and many less, pretentious.

All over the Indian frontier, these "cantonments" are thus called.

A majority of them have no more than one piece of artillery, and that, oftentimes, so very old and so honeycombed in the bore, as to be dangerous, if loaded heavily enough to be effective for defensive purposes.

In fact, it is never thought of in that connection, and is only used for those needlessly expensive parades, so thought Fatty Forbush and Ysleta, a sunrise and sunset gun, and for funeral or national salutes.

"Thousands of dollars," said Fatty to Moultrie, "are annually wasted in this unnecessary practice, which might be better expended in improving highways, building bridges, erecting and outfitting life-saving stations, and in numerous other useful ways."

"For those early days of semi-barbarism, when the fashion began, and civilization was groping in intellectual twilight, it was well enough, but now we have arrived at an age of enlightenment and practical common sense, that demands benefit for money and material expended." Fatty was incorrigible in his prejudices.

The trite saying, "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," is, alas! too oft exemplified in exceedingly harmful directions.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMID NEW SCENES HERCULES UNEXPECTEDLY APPEARS.

To tell the truth, Moultrie was not particularly pleased with military life. He had seen too much drinking and gambling.

First impressions, as he had received them at the camp just left, had not been wholly agreeable.

Yet he secretly resented Fatty's endeavor to force a forestallment of his judgment, and was willing to wait for further knowledge, gleaned from further association and experience.

He was no crank. His life was in another sphere, on another plane. That was all.

He never was, from early boyhood, illiberal intentionally, and never could have been in thought or act, because it was not in him.

And now, he wondered if he had allowed himself to be unconsciously biased by Forbush openly, and Ysleta subtly.

He was young, and youth exaggerates, and maybe he exaggerated all they said.

At college he had looked upon Fatty as the very personification of shrewdness, liberality, truth, and alertness.

He believed that notwithstanding the active espousal of his cause by Professor Cheval, and that friend's well-planned effort to rescue him from Quantrell's clutches, he would have most surely fallen a victim to that man, had not Forbush and Hercules so opportunely called into service the secret societies.

He had great faith in Señor Ysleta, and at first did not take into due consideration his inborn hostility to American army officers.

Fatty never thought to, or at least never did, put in the balance against the few snubs he had received, the numerous courtesies of which he had been the recipient at the hands of army officers.

He never stopped to array face to face, and pro and con, the undeniable and acknowledged merits as army officers and as gentlemen, of those who had treated him hospitably, against that meagre sprinkling of conceited puppies and upstarts, who not only disgrace the army, but are also a reproach to every other respectable professional and non-professional walk of life, wherein they are found.

He had encountered the same element at college, and had then said of them, that they were fit timber for the "*pons asinorum.*" Had said it so often, that every one *else* had shouted, "chestnut."

He was unjustly biased adversely, and ridiculously so, for one of his intelligence, and his bias had its effect on Moultrie.

One of Fatty's hobbies that he aired most industriously, was the alleged extravagance and wastefulness of military men and military administration, and he cited the ceremony of firing a sunrise and sunset gun, as an example. Yet he never did condemn civil service extravagance, however flagrant.

"Si Señor, in everything they are lavish," said Ysleta.

Now no man living had a keener sense of exact justice than Moultrie, and "he thought like lightning too," Fatty was wont to declare.

"Pardon me, Señor," he replied. "Let me say, those were high-toned, honorable gentlemen we left at the camp behind us, and funny as it may seem to you, Beaustrum is a pink of chivalry, I think. Please don't interrupt me. He would defend a woman's honor at all hazards. Most certainly I can see that in his face, and he never, I notice, joins in gossip about the gentler sex.

"However, I will give you a chance to convince

me, if you can, that you know what you are talking about.

"But please let up on those gentleman for the present. I am very grateful for all their hospitality and courtesy.

"When you talk about extravagance do not cite that camp, you are 'a long way off your base, if you do.

"And now, as we approach this garrison, I can see, through my glasses, one thing that I saw at the camp that struck me as very economical as well as a capital idea.

"I mean those brooms made from the branches of trees. What gentleman in civilization would use anything of the kind to sweep his lawn with?

"If he couldn't do any better than that he would let it go unswept.

"And how skillfully those soldiers handled them, and how thoroughly neat and cleanly they made everything look.

"As for announcing the in-coming and out-going of day, by cannon firing, I can see no reasonable objection to it. Bridges, roads and public buildings could be built cheaper without ornamentation, but we prefer the ornaments notwithstanding the expense.

"Gunpowder belongs to the military profession the same as electricity and steam belong to certain trades, and who wishes machinery to be less ornate.

"If you propose to silence the morning and evening gun of these people, why not go further, and stop the factory whistles and church bells?

"Prohibit fire-alarm boxes, and electric signals.

"You have just as much right and there would be just as much and not a whit less of reason in doing so. Drums, cannon and trumpets have their appointed uses, like other things.

"You are prejudiced, Fatty, that is plain to see," said Moultrie. "Let me base my conclusions on my own observations."

It was four miles down that long, gently sloping hill to the fort, but our friends drove on at a brisk gait, leaving the cavalry to come in more leisurely, and soon pulled up in front of the post-trader's.

They were received with great cordiality, and made comfortable and at home, in a very short time.

That evening there was to be a hop, given in honor of the paymaster, who had arrived the day previous, on his bi-monthly visit for the purpose of making payments to the troops.

Of course, Moultrie and his friends were invited.

There were two officers and one lady at the fort, whom Moultrie had met before, but whose presence there he was in ignorance of. And they, on their part, although his name had been mentioned repeatedly, during the evening, before their introduction to him, little suspected he was the De Kalb they knew.

But of this more anon.

There were other causes that conspired to establish Moultrie's advent in this place as a sort of epoch in his life.

There were several young ladies there, with three of whom Moultrie later on became well acquainted. They had come out to the remote frontier ostensibly on a visit to "their sisters, or their aunts, or their uncles, or their cousins," but in truth were on a seining expedition for those whom, in their inexperience, they considered would make desirable husbands.

What an infatuation girls do have for gold lace and military uniforms.

Shoulderstraps were their especial ambition, but somehow, with ever so much of adroit angling, their wished-for gold-fish would not bite.

The appearance of Moultrie, heralded as I have heretofore mentioned, as a veritable Croesus, a Monte Christo, was therefore a sort of God-send.

That he would immediately fall desperately in love with them, they confidently believed. Not the

slightest suspicion of anything, to the contrary, entered their dear little heads.

Which of them would finally capture him, was the problem.

Of course, he would be charmed with each.

He would pose for them (with pertect self-unconsciousness) jointly, as a real novelty, and a most interesting and veritable saviour, redeeming them, by his attentions, from a repetition of their oft-repeated efforts to entangle military bachelors. They never thought, for an instant, that, possibly, he might have a dear little sweetheart somewhere far away. Or if so, they would be smart enough to find it out and cut her out. And, in any event, a nice little flirtation would be "just too sweet for anything."

It was to be a crucial trial for him, too, for, though little used to ladies' society, he, somehow, was always shrewdly conscious of the fact, when being covertly guyed, or, from selfish motives, paid ostentatious attention. And he distrusted and hated whomever he detected so doing, and was, in his consequent anger, sometimes abrupt and a little rude.

At the hour he drove up to the store, Mrs. Olds, the wife of the post-trader, was dressing to go out into the garrison, to tell the ladies what delicious sandwiches, "and such a stack of them," she had made for the ball, as well as cake and four dozen tarts.

She waited, however, long enough to have a glass of wine, and a five minutes' talk with Moultrie, and then left him in her husband's care.

She was a chatty little woman, much given to word-painting in flashy colors, no matter how much more subdued and modest, or even sombre tints, would have accorded with whatever the subject might be. She was therefore generally accredited with a disposition to exaggerate, not that she did so, but because of her way of expressing opinions, and her bright temperament gave that impression.

There was not a particle of malice in her nature. Though her naturally sunshiny disposition would cloud up immediately, at any ill natured snubbing of which she, or any friend, was made the victim, and she would promptly resent insufferable arrogance, much of which she encountered, with as great warmth as anyone else.

She always valorously championed those she liked, regardless of who were her opponents.

There were several intolerant army ladies in the garrison, who frequently affronted her with supercilious airs, and implied sneers at "shopkeepers."

In fact, they "sat down on her" whenever opportunity offered.

The wine she had taken just before going out, loosened her tongue, always voluble enough, and the baking over a hot stove had flushed her face unusually, when she entered Mrs. Durant's cottage.

That lady—a lieutenant's wife—was a little, light haired, affected woman, reared in a New Jersey village, from where she had made occasional trips to Gotham, each succeeding one of which, only increased her yearning for permanent metropolitan life.

She would have been pretty but for her chronic discontent, that brought crows-feet under her eyes, and creased the corners of her mouth with unbecoming, premature wrinkles.

Furthermore, when she was vexed, those corners would draw down, and then she looked positively homely.

Another matter that militated against her chances for popularity was her senseless and transparent attempt to imitate the elegant *blasé*, of her best friend, Mrs. Ponsonbys. She seemed to consider Mrs. P. especially distingué, and her prime ambition was to make herself, as nearly as possible, her *alter idem*.

There was as much consistency and sense in her, in this connection, as there is in a stout man who buys

a certain style of coat because it looks well on a slim man.

Or a short man who goes straightway and purchases a certain new fashion in hats, because he has discovered it is becoming to a certain tall friend.

Mrs. Ponsonbys was a voluptuous, imposing looking, city-bred lady, the very antipodes of Mrs. Durant. She was taller and a positive brunette, with large dreamy brown eyes, black hair and eyebrows, a decidedly retroussé, though pretty nose, and a perfect mouth.

The contour of her face and chin was perfect, and in general *tout ensemble* she was a model of her style of beauty.

She was with Mrs. Durant in her sitting room when Mrs. Olds called.

So also was Miss Swimm, neice of the colonel commanding the garrison, and Miss Leclerque, a sister of another officer. Mrs. Ponsonbys' reception of Mrs. Olds was so lazily elegant and politely condescending that Mrs. Durant sighed and turned up her eyes, because she could not successfully imitate it.

Miss Swimm was about twenty-eight years of age.

She was a sort of companion and governess for her uncle's wife, a somewhat fat, indolent, and envious matron, whose children were weak-minded and malevolent, and whose vicious disposition toward other children the mother senselessly encouraged, on the silly ground that, as the offspring of the commanding officer, they had a perfect right to browbeat.

Notwithstanding her obesity, which seemed very uncomfortable to her, and her acidity of temper, Mrs. Swimm had very pretty small, plump hands.

But no one was half as conscious of it as herself.

In the ball-room and in the chapel one of these hands was always ungloved, but at home, in private, they were bathed in mysterious preparations, and bandaged with exceeding care, in order that their rare comeliness might be perpetuated.

In public they were conspicuously exhibited, just

as merchants parade their best wares ostentatiously in shop windows.

Sometimes one of them served to prop up the chin, sometimes it lingered, through many flitting moments, at the back hair, adjusting some unoffending hairpin.

In a hundred ways and constantly they were paraded with evident pride, the way in which it occurred depending entirely on the position of the observer.

If he sat behind her, the back of the chair was the point of attack. If in front, the chatelaine, and if he had to be approached, the bric-a-brac.

Rumor said that, between her and the children, Miss Swimm, the niece, had a very hard time of it.

Gaunt had on several occasions incurred Madame's everlasting enmity, but he had recently intensified her concentrated hatred of him, by a sally uttered on the evening of a reception, when he was in the midst of one of his periodical sprees.

He had been looking at, and silently admiring her beautiful hand (and she was fully aware of the fact), when suddenly he exclaimed, without comprehending the full force of his utterance,

"What a great pity it is that there are so many ladies in society, who cannot even run a scale on a piano, in fact cannot read one note from another. Piano playing, I think, affords them the best excuse in the world to exhibit their charming hands, lavishly, without exciting any suspicion whatever of vanity."

Mrs. Swimm, of course, was furious, and, to cap the climax, the wretch invited her to dance.

He knew she could not, and she knew *that* he knew it.

"He is drunk!" she said, and walked away, much disgusted.

Could any one expect anything else from such an erratic? Why, once, at the funeral of a brave fellow, whom he had "fettered to his heart with links

of steel," Gaunt, after celebrating his demise in copious libations, had stood at the foot of the coffin and sung, with tears in his eyes,

"Oh! He was a jolly good fellow," etc.

There was something about Miss Swimm that was singularly attractive.

She was not so very pretty, but there was a peculiarity of manner, and a singular expression, and the slightest perceptible of lisps when she talked, coupled with convincing simple earnestness, and a wistful, expectant look out of the round, staring eyes, that involuntarily claimed your attention, and excited a positively pleasurable feeling.

She sat a horse like a queen of equestrienneship, but, after some of her maddest gallops, never showed any color.

Her face was broad, habitually pale, and when uninfluenced by excitement, more or less clammy. But that did not detach from the interest it inspired.

She seemed almost without a neck, it was so short, and her shoulders were so high and square.

She was Anglo-Saxon purely, with short wide hands and stubby fingers, and possessed none of those accomplishments usual among young ladies brought up, in recent years, by parents of ordinary means or culture.

"She's a daisy!" Gaunt had often said, "and a splendid spoon for out here, but I'd have to be awful forgetful of myself to tie to her for life."

One thing could be said of Miss Swimm, decidedly in her favor, she knew fully as well as any one else, that her education had been sadly neglected, and she had none of the coarse pretension of her obtuse aunt.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME OF MOULTRIE'S NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

MISS LECLERQUE had big blue-gray, expressive eyes, that became sombre or brilliant, as the light or some sudden emotion affected them, and they looked out frankly from under long gold-hued lashes.

They were the windows through which one saw a guileless and lovable heart.

Her soul peered out through these beautiful eyes, and talked to you eloquently in voiceless language.

She was good, pretty and sensible.

Possibly a tendency to æsthetics gave her at times, in speech and pose, the appearance of being somewhat affected. But she was not so in the least.

Mrs. Rigby and Miss Wilbur, the other two ladies in this bevy, were, in facial lineaments, the direct opposites.

Mrs. Rigby was slender in figure and angular.

Her forehead slanted forward, as it rose from above the eyebrows, and overhung the balance of the face. The cheek bones were high, her eyes sunken, and her nose hooked.

The upper lip was short and thin, and was considerably over-lapped by the lower when the mouth was closed, and went out of sight when she was angered or indignant.

The chin protruded so that a line drawn from its point to the top of the forehead would describe the chord of an arc. In other words, her face, perpendicularly, was crescent shaped.

She was very talkative and remarkably plausible.

There was some genuine good feeling and much humbug in her sympathy, and she described the most improbable thing with an air of vraisemblance absolutely astounding. Gaunt declared she could utter four hundred words to the minute. Fatty was

struck dumb in his first attempt to converse with her.

It was impossible, she assumed, for anyone to have been first in the introduction of any household novelty on the frontier—a hobby of hers—or ahead in any timely suggestion, or the victim of more hairbreadth escapes. And no one could have been the heroine of more thrilling episodes than she, according to her version.

Ever and anon her husband was completely overwhelmed, when besieged for confirmation of her stories, by some defeated maid or matron, who, after retailing some exciting adventure, had been thrust abruptly into the shade by the narration of some Gulliver-like and surpassing experience of his invincible wife.

Miss Wilbur's face would, in profile from forehead to chin, represent the convex side of an arc. From eyebrows that rose like promontories over very light blue-green eyes, the forehead retreated at an angle of several degrees, as it mounted upward.

The cheeks were very fleshy, red, and always abundantly powdered. They looked like the two halves of a beautiful peach split open, with the fuzz left on, and a modest pug nose set in between.

And when she joined the other ladies in a sorosis, or a game of croquet on the parade ground, she affected a jaunty little Fez, crimson or yellow, trimmed with gold braid, and topped off with a short, gold tassel, or pompom.

Her lips were thick and scarlet, and the mouth, quite wide and cut straight across the face, described an outward curve, from corner to corner, with no terminating dimples to relieve the suggestion of mathematics.

From the crest of the lower lip, the chin began a precipitate retreat, and when the head was pitched forward, its poor diminutive little point was utterly lost in the billowy flesh at the throat.

Her teeth were regular, well kept, and really beautiful, and her hands small and pretty.

She would have been a fine companion for the sphinx, because she always listened with rapt attention and very seldom spoke.

She would take in gossip, openmouthed and voraciously, but was never known to retail it.

She was ingenuous, kind and popular.

After the formality of greeting, Mrs. Olds described, in glowing language, what she had prepared in the way of refreshments, and then announced, in a somewhat triumphant manner, the sudden arrival of her husband's partner,

"Indeed, an'! Then he has weached he-ah at lawst, has he?" Said Mrs. Durant, in a drawling, affected tone,

"We have lund"—(meaning learned)—"he was coming, sometime ago, I suppose the sto-ah—(meaning store)—"will be verah much enlarged now. Won't it?"

"What does he look like?" asked Miss Swimm, in a straightforward, practical way.

"He is very nice, isn't he?" Said Miss Leclerque.

"Oh! Remarkably! Remarkably nice!"

Exclaimed Mrs. Ponsonbys, in a die-away manner, not waiting for Mrs. Olds to reply.

"There's no end to his property, either in mines, horses, cattle and stores, and in land, in New Mexico and Colorado, and in bank and railroad stocks, and everything else for that matter." Said Mrs. Rigby, positively.

"My husband says he would retire from the army in five minutes if he owned one fiftieth part of his money and property."

"Well, I should smile!" exclaimed Mrs Olds, triumphantly. With a toss of her head.

"Rich! Why that's no name for it! he's rolling in wealth! Just r-o-l-l-i-n-g! And what's more, he knows how to pile it up higher! 'You bet!' as Billy would say—And he's young, and *so* handsome,

and so very liberal too! Why he brought an agent with him, to take care of his interest in his business here with my husband, and a great, fine-looking Mexican cattle-king besides, to look after some grand stock speculation! He'll make business just hum, in these parts. Just wait and see if he don't.

"I tell *you*, he don't do anything by halves, and he looks awful young, for such a great millionaire. Billy says he will just put life into business, and that's something that has been needed a long while. He is the "*successfulest*" man in the West, with his mines and his hotels and his live-stock and stores and other things! But you'll all see him to-night, for he's going to the hop with Billy and me."

And Mrs. Olds bestowed a complacent glance around, as she made this last announcement.

But the covert looks exchanged among her listeners were not complacent. They were all decidedly jealous.

Many questions and answers followed; and a rattling conversation, with all talking at once, was kept up for some minutes.

After she left Mrs. Durant's, the conversation, in so far as it referred to Mrs. Olds, was not complimentary.

She had incidentally, but somewhat exultantly, said she had taken a glass of wine with Moultrie, before hurrying over there, to tell them of his sudden arrival, and this, more than anything else, piqued the other ladies.

It seemed too bad, they thought, that some one higher in the social scale had not been first to receive and bid him welcome.

They had all, in different ways, set the young man up as a species of demi-god, and then built air-castles about him, for themselves to occupy. Post-traders make many presents to army ladies, and each of these estimable maids and matrons had been storing up their prospective share of the golden

fleece, when the shearing time of the wonderful, coming, affluent lamb should arrive.

"Rolling in wealth," was a sweet morsel to nurse under their tongues, for doubtless he was also very susceptible, and could be cajoled or hypnotized into bestowing munificent gifts.

And "liberal and generous" suggested a good many possibilities.

Mirabile dictu! What might not come of it? And for her, 'that miserable Mrs. Olds!' A mere shop-keeper's wife, and he not much of a shop-keeper at that, to be the first in the whole garrison, to extend courtesy to this wonderful owner of the golden fleece.

It was just too insufferable to think of!

"Rolling in wealth!"

That was the pedestal they stood him on.

One by one the ladies withdrew, and Mrs. Durant nervously summoned and sent a "dog-robber" hurriedly, in search of her husband.

He was found, too deeply absorbed over an exciting game of cards, to respond promptly, and Mrs. D. bit her lip and wept scalding tears of vexation, as she saw Major Rigby pass her cottage, and enter the post-trader's.

"Anyone but him! Oh dear! *Anyone* but him!"

She exclaimed, bitterly.

"O why couldn't Henry come!"

And she stamped vehemently on her handkerchief that dropped at the moment from her hand to the carpet.

"If it had been Captain Ponsonbys I wouldn't care, or even Colonel Swimm, because he is the commanding officer!"

"But old Rigby! Just to think of it! Old Rigby, of all persons!"

And alas, also, for their dames! Ponsonbys and Swimm were sampling some new liquors, recently arrived, and smoking Henry Clay Conchas, at that

very moment, and neither spouse could find her lord.

The Rigby's therefore were victors in this silly little conflict, and Moultrie stretched his legs under their mahogany first at dinner.

It was after ten o'clock that evening when, with Mrs. Olds, he entered the ball-room.

She had been in no hurry to get him there, rather enjoying the "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick," which, for over an hour, had filled the souls of the other expectant ladies.

As he entered through the doorway, which was gayly festooned with flags, and opened into the main barracks, a quadrille was just ending.

A buzz of voices greeted his appearance, and all eyes were turned toward him.

Major Rigby, who, at his wife's request, immediately approached, took charge of and conducted him to the gentlemen's dressing-room, while Mrs. Olds hurried into that for the ladies.

Down at the lower end of the long room stood a tall, muscular-looking gentleman conversing with Miss Leclerque and another lady, whose loveliness of face and form made her the cynosure of all eyes.

"I wonder where the lion of the evening can be keeping himself," she remarked, with an arch smile, to Miss Leclerque, and a look that seemed to say, "You ought to know or would very much like to."

"That I can't tell,"

Was the reply, and then with an admiring glance,

"I am sufficiently entertained with the lioness."

And she tapped the beautiful, bare arm of the lovely stranger affectionately with her crimson and white fan.

I have said "stranger" using the term only in the relationship of the reader to this lady. She was not a stranger in the garrison, by any means.

The tall gentleman was her husband and was, in rank, one of the junior officers on duty at the fort.

His wife was not a pronounced blonde, though her hair was like threads of Titian gold.

Her complexion, when in repose, was of dazzling whiteness, and her face a little too long to be called round.

The forehead was not high, and yet you could not call it low, and the soft, dark eyebrows looked as if pencilled by some master limner.

The eyes seemed to speak almost articulately as they gazed into your own, and you could not help going, in response, down into their rich, liquid depths, where you fell a captive to their spell, and entered as if by magic helplessly into full sympathy with the moods they reflected.

Veiled somewhat by a mesh of long, silken lashes, those bright, beautiful, everchanging windows of the soul, looked like a brace of very Kohinoors, shining, now mistily, then resplendently.

A faint, pink tint, when she was slightly animated, mantled the gracefully rounded cheek which, in the excitement of the dance, flushed richly.

The upper lip, from the nostrils down, was rather long, but served only to bring out, in bolder relief, the exquisitely chiseled, perfect, Grecian nose.

The mouth, when at rest, had the merest insinuation of a pout, and on its soft, pliant outlines, there reposed, unconsciously, a wealth of sweetness.

Like the other features of her expressive face, it was susceptible of most eloquent changes, that came and went with emotion, slowly, or suddenly as a lightning flash.

About five feet five inches in height, with pretty, sloping shoulders, well rounded, plump and shapely arms, and long tapering fingers, she was what Mrs. Rigby uniformly told every new comer:

"A thing of beauty, which is a joy forever."

"Mrs. R. sets great store by this quotation," Mrs. Olds told Moultrie, after the hop was over.

"Besides being perfectly lovely," Mrs. Rigby would continue,——

"She is as graceful as a willow; as amiable as an angel, and so wonderfully cute and magnetic, that every one has to just give right up and join in, whenever she talks and laughs."

Her husband, reader, is an old friend.

Before Moultrie saunters down the ball-room, with Mrs. Olds on his arm, let us renew his acquaintance.

He was the Enceladus of Cedar-Crest College, who rebelled against the fictitious law-minions under Quantrell, on the railroad embankment, that dark midnight you wot of, when Moultrie took Horace Greeley's advice, and "went West." He was more successful, however, than the other giant of that name, who rebelled against ancient Rome's supreme God.

He completely worsted Quantrell and his henchmen, you will recollect, and sent Moultrie speeding on his west-bound trip, never expecting to again meet him, in this far away garrison, so remote from civilization.

We met him then as *Hercules*, and as Hercules we will continue to know him.

The bright little being you have been introduced to, and who has taken him "for better or for worse —through sickness and through health—" we shall call "Mrs. Hercules."

The last people to whom Moultrie was introduced, before reaching his old friend, were lieutenant Gabbler and his petite wife. Now Gabbler was a good enough sort of fellow, so every one said, but his petite wife was a terror—in crinoline.

Although not over five yards away, at this time, Hercules failed to recognize Moultrie, and Moultrie in his turn, had been so engaged that he had not set eyes, as yet, on his old schoolmate.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GARRISON HOP.

IT was during a lull in the music, and after Mrs. Olds had surrendered her escort to Mrs. Gabbler, that the two became aware of the presence of each other.

The *latter* heard the *former* laugh, turned suddenly, and looking more closely, abruptly left his wife's side and strode toward him.

Moultrie, of course, had not the slightest idea that Hercules was within a thousand miles of the place, much less, as a regular army officer. In fact he had not had him in his mind at all.

Hercules had changed considerably too, having now a long, dark moustache and goatee, and his hair shingled short. Whereas he was beardless, and had had long hair, when a student at Cedar-Crest.

Mrs. Gabbler was the first to observe his approach, and believed him under the influence of liquor.

Quick as a flash—(little women are always quick)—she resolved to introduce him, and then, afterward, soon as she could get Moultrie away, apologize, in a manner that would put him low in Moultrie's opinion, without seeming to be so intended, for she disliked Hercules, both because he was more popular than her husband, and also because his wife was the belle of the fort.

She was a wily, cunning little creature, this Mrs. Gabbler, and never forgave our Enceladus for bringing into the garrison a lady so infinitely more attractive than herself, and so superior to her in every respect, as his wife was. She skillfully, later on, led that beautiful but weak wife, to that point where domestic differences that should only have provoked ordinary family jars, were made the occasion of most

serious ruptures and a final divorce. And jealousy was her only motive.

By hints and inuendoes she kindled a flame that grew and finally destroyed Hercules, so far as domestic peace and further military service were concerned.

This she did so cunningly, however, and pulled her strings so subtly, that she was never suspected, by either of the two so deeply concerned, until too late. And then only by Hercules. His wife never lost confidence in her. And how could she? Mrs. Gabbler, all along pretended, most successfully, deep sympathy and unselfish devotion to Mrs. Hercules, and did, to a certain extent, admire and love her.

But this she could not help, for Mrs. H. was really lovable, and Mrs. Gabbler kissed her merely because she liked to do it.

There was nothing more to be counted on, in her conduct in this particular, than is presented when a very hungry man eats a remarkably excellent dinner, with unusual greediness.

Turning suddenly and halting her partner, face to face with him, just as Hercules came up, she said,—

"Here is one of our young officers who would like to know you, Mr. De Kalb, let me introduce him,

"Mr. De Kalb, Lieutenant Hercules—Lieutenant Hercules, Mr. De Kalb."

But she had not finished before Hercules, thoroughly satisfied it was his former schoolmate, exclaiming,

"Why, you dear old boy!"

Took him in his arms and lifted him off the floor, like an ordinary man would an infant.

His wife, not knowing what to make of the performance, hurried to his side, a look of mingled expectancy, surprise and inquiry distending her lovely eyes. "What could such rude, unseemly conduct mean?" she asked herself.

And Miss Leclerque hurried after her.

Of course everyone near by turned to look, and

those further up the room, observing something unusual, exclaimed:

"Look there!"

Or "What's the commotion?"

Or, "O dear me, what can the matter be?"

Mrs. Gabbler, pointing to Hercules, whispered, ominously to Mrs. Rigby, the person nearest her,

"He's drunk again; isn't it a shame?"

And they both made commiserating eyes at each other.

Now the reader, before going further, should know that Mrs. Hercules was a sort of monomaniac on the subject of liquor. It made her positively wild if her husband got under its influence, or even imbibed but once.

When he saw his wife standing near and looking quizzically, Hercules released Moultrie, keeping one arm around his waist, however, and said,

"Grace, dear, this is my old schoolmate, Moultrie DeKalb, that I have told you so much about. Shake hands with him. And now, Moultrie, old boy, you and Grace must be good friends, for the sake of 'auld lang syne.'"

They exchanged greetings very cordially, and Mrs. Hercules said something about "the great surprise and pleasure it was to find that the new trader was a gentleman her husband regarded so sincerely," and more in the same drift. And as she caught up the delight irradiating the manly features of that personage, and reflected it from her own luminous eyes and speaking face, Moultrie was thoroughly bewitched with her entrancing beauty.

Little Mrs. Gabbler stole up alongside, looking as innocent as a kitten, and took one of Mrs. Hercules' hands, whereupon Mrs. Rigby remarked, *sotto voce*, that she had made

"A great mistake,"

Referring to the former's charge that Hercules was drunk.

A quick glance of warning was all the answer Mrs.

Gabbler vouchsafed, but the passage did not escape the wife and she asked, with wondering eyes,

"What grand mistake? Tell me, for goodness sake, dear," looking inquiringly into Mrs. Gabbler's dissembling face.

Which question Mrs. Gabbler feigned to not hear, and said, half audibly, to Mrs. Rigby.

"He was drunk with overwhelming pleasure at the unexpected meeting with his dear old schoolmate."

"Oh!" was the answering exclamation, in a tone and with a suggestive shrug that Mrs. G—— disliked, and which made the others present feel uneasy. Mrs. Rigby did so hate hypocrisy. That could not be reckoned as in her catalogue of faults. Nor was she malicious.

Hercules scowled for an instant, without any tangible or intelligent reason under the sun—he afterward said to himself, except that he didn't fancy Mrs. Gabbler. And his wife looked inquiringly at Mrs. Rigby, who walked off with some one, at the moment opportunely passing.

Then the two gentlemen excused themselves to the ladies, and strolled, arm in arm, down the ballroom.

"That old woman will always misconstrue,"
Said Mrs. Gabbler, after she was beyond earshot.
And Mrs. Hercules answered,
"Never mind, dear," and put her arm around her, and never asked what had been misconstrued.

And thus she was blindly hugging to her bosom —a viper.

A matter of excessive annoyance, at this time, presented itself to the young officer. There were half as many more families in the garrison as there were necessary "quarters" for. His regulation allowance was two rooms.

As a consequence every one had to "double up," according to rank. This had reduced him to one room.

"Doubling up"—in military parlance—means

two officers occupying the quarters usually given one.

That is, everyone had to take half his regular allowance of rooms, in the several cottages, and Hercules, being one of the junior officers, fared as badly as the worst.

Where bachelors only are thus inconvenienced, the deprivation is not so bad. But to a newly-married lady, who had always had a luxurious home, it is a serious hardship, and this was the case with Hercules' wife.

He had only one room in which to eat, sleep and receive company, of which he would have had considerable, had his wife been half as sociable as people desired her to be.

His cooking was done in a tent, set upon a frame in the back-yard, and his servant slept in another and smaller one, behind it.

It was impossible, therefore, for him to carry out the wish nearest his heart, *i. e.*, entertain Moultrie under his own vine and fig-tree. "No!" he said, "I haven't any vine, and my fig-tree is left out in the cold. I hope dear Moultrie will understand the situation."

Of course his explanation on this point was perfectly satisfactory, and furthermore, his invitation to breakfast the next morning was frankly and cordially accepted, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Gabbler, who had hoped that some insurmountable reason might exist to prevent, or that it would not be tendered. And that she, at least, would be the first in the garrison to have him at a morning meal.

Two ladies of the Fort were absent from the hop that night, on account of indisposition, and the husbands of two others, instead of being at home, were at the officers' club-room, enjoying a game of cards.

A few minutes before midnight Moultrie walked across the parade-ground with Hercules and his wife, and leaving the lady at her quarters the two old

schoolmates sauntered down to the club, on the way meeting Mr. and Mrs. Olds, en route home.

This seductive resort was an extension of the post trader's store, about forty-five by thirty feet, and contained, beside billiard tables, two large round tables with dice, chess, dominoes, and several euchre decks for the free use of officers and their friends.

It was fitted up and maintained by the trader and paid him handsomely.

Every military garrison on the Indian border has a club-room, more or less pretentious. Some are maintained by the officers solely and are quite exclusive.

Others are in the nature of an annex to the Post Trader's store. Some are paying establishments, others are just about self-maintaining, and still others are a veritable incubus on the purse of their supporters. This latter number is very small, however.

The club-room, being the most spacious at Fort S——, it was there the great "pow-wow" or peace council with the Indian chiefs was held. Moultrie and Fatty had ample opportunity to witness it, as they had rooms in the residence portion of the building adjoining. And it proved a great treat, being both entertaining and instructive.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OFFICERS' CLUB. FATTY'S MISTAKE. HERCULES RESCUES MOULTRIE.

THE residence portion of the long, rambling, rectangular post-trader building was occupied by Mr. Olds and his clerks. After leaving Mrs. Olds there, he, Moultrie and Hercules, delayed some little while

chatting, during which time several officers, in full dress, were seen passing down the walk to the club.

Probably seven or eight had thus gone by before Olds conducted his companions around the front to the inside.

As they entered the well-lighted room, one party of four gentlemen, in uniform, was discovered absorbed in a game of poker at one of the round tables, each having small piles of red, white and blue ivory "chips" at his elbow, which represented more or less money, previously deposited in what was called the bank, an empty cigar box, in charge of one of the players, who had been chosen banker.

At the billiard table another group was engaged at pin pool, a popular frontier game at that time.

The loser of each game, in the latter case, ordered such refreshments as each of the other players desired; liquid or solid or both.

In the course of several games several drinks would be taken, and the participants who drank each time would become more or less exhilarated.

An unquestioned authority on the subject has said that,

"As a seductive mill, for the grinding out of drunkards and gamblers, the pool-table is the peer of any other agent that can be mentioned in civilized circles."

It is far more attractive to the majority of young men than whist, poker, blue peter, or any other gambling game at cards.

The appearance of Moultrie was something in the nature of a divertisement.

A game at the pool-table had just been lost, and the loser was asking the others what refreshments they would take.

He had been introduced to Moultrie at the hop, and therefore, in courtesy, invited him and his companions to, quoting his own phraseology,

"Nominate their pizen."

Hercules, promptly, with a bright smile, called for

"a stiff whiskey," meaning a big drink, while Olds drank beer with Moultrie.

A pleasant, miscellaneous conversation followed.

A stalwart young officer, who had been a looker on, and Olds joining the pool party, while Moultrie, seated at the vacant table, glanced over the newspapers, every now and then passing a pleasant word or two with the different players.

While thus engaged there was a brief break in the card-playing at the other table, and a couple of the players left the room.

One of them passed close to Moultrie, who looked up at the same moment, to answer a laughing sally by a member of the pool-party. As he did so, he caught the eye of the passing card-player, and that person, considerably under the influence of his potations, halted abruptly, with an expression of amazement on his semi-stupid features.

Neither Moultrie nor the gentleman who had spoken to him, could help but notice it, and the latter, for some reason unexplained, not, perhaps, being on speaking terms with the subject of this strange conduct, turned away, not proffering the introduction usual under such circumstances. After pausing a moment, the poker-player proceeded to the exit door, muttering unintelligibly, but before reaching it, in passing another of the pool party, he asked,

"Who in thunder is that "cit." over there?"

When informed he exclaimed,

"The devil you say!" And then passed out.

Moultrie thought that, somewhere, he had seen that face before, but where, he could not remember.

While he was trying to recall the time and place, Fatty Forbush and Gomez Ysleta entered, the former very much under the influence of *Aguardiente*, an insidious, Mexican brandy which the latter had obtained from old-time friends, unexpectedly met at a ranch in the neighborhood, and whom he had intimately known years before, when his father's

cattle range extended down the Rio Pecos to its mouth on the upper Rio Grande.

One of Fatty's late unfortunate weaknesses was his growing fondness for his toddy.

On infrequent occasions he would gratify that liking too much, and too long, and although he never became stupidly drunk, he would get what some people call "mellow," and keep that way for days.

And often, when he did this, he became reckless and was easily induced to gamble, a thing he would never do in his sober moments.

"Aguardiente" is a treacherous beverage.

It successfully searches out the remotest crannies and nooks in one's senses, and insinuates itself into them, overpoweringly, completely upsetting self-control as no other intoxicant can. One drink of it begets a craving for another, more subtly, perhaps, than any other unfamiliar beverage, Russian vodka not excepted.

Fatty was not aware of this fact, be it said in extenuation, and therefore had imbibed it as freely as he would the familiar American whiskey, with whose influence and power he could intelligently cope.

He had made a sad mistake in so doing, as was indicated when he entered the club-room, and he had made a worse mistake when he showed himself, in his semi-drunken condition, to Moultrie, who was so kindly and thoughtfully consummating plans to reinstate him in good fortune.

Fatty did not realize this though, any more than he knew the difference between the insidious Mexican compound and good American liquor.

He was just now in the "mellow" mood several consecutive hours of indulgence had placed him, and joining the poker players, he fell in, unfortunately, with an officer he had met in New Mexico who had won from him, in various previous sittings, several hundred dollars. He was introduced by this officer to the other gentleman at the table, and entered the game, just as the parties who had left the room,

temporarily, returned and resumed their seats. He had sense enough left, in his semi-maudlin condition, to decline a drink and ask for a cigar, when urged to take something "socially."

Meanwhile Señor Ysleta, also slightly intoxicated, after a few words of greeting with Moultrie, was visibly startled when the door opened and the officer, who had behaved so singularly on passing the latter, entered, and with a fierce look and step, stalked toward him.

Involuntarily his hand flew for his pistol, in its holster, at his hip.

The look and step, however, were from ugly thoughts, having no reference whatever to the Mexican, and the officer stalked past as if totally oblivious of his presence.

"Who is he?" asked Moultrie. "I certainly have seen him somewhere."

"It is El Capitaine Blondin," was the answer.

"The gentleman to whom I was unpleasantly forced to pay my compliments at the canyon store when he struck you, in your own office, if you recollect."

Moultrie did recollect.

Looking at his watch he saw it was long after midnight and he wondered if it was the rule everywhere in garrisons to turn night into day and keep up a continuous round of nocturnal wassail.

If so, it did not seem strange to him that, on their relatively liberal pay and allowances, army officers seldom saved up any money. He preferred, however, not to suggest retiring to Mr. Olds, liking, rather, to remain to further learn by personal observation, while the opportunity lasted, what sort of life his new business had really introduced him to, and what kind of duties he would impose on, as well as what temptations he would be compelled to subject Fatty to, as his agent. Yet he did not care to encounter Blondin again.

Of course he did not rashly conclude that the occurrences of one night's festivities could be a com-

plete and correct index for all time, nor that he could infallibly judge of army life, in its entirety, from the various representative types presented in that single garrison.

Moultrie was neither narrow-minded nor selfish, and he was, to a certain extent, justly accredited by these strangers, as has been stated in previous pages, with a reputation for great liberality.

It is true, too, that he had amassed an Aladdin-like fortune in what appeared a marvelously brief period.

All of his numerous speculations had been wonderfully successful. All he had touched "had turned to gold."

He did not linger in the club-room, a looker-on, through any motive of mean espionage, but rather to survey, critically, the glimpses afforded him of the new and, to him, strange world he was a temporary denizen of, and to satisfy himself, as far as the opportunity would permit, of what existed therein of moment to his own interests.

It would be hard to analyze his feelings when he saw Fatty enter and go so promptly to the gaming-table to gamble with the very gentlemen he had, in several conversations, so condemned.

He felt both annoyance and resentment.

Somehow, he had all along given to Hercules and Fatty the bulk of credit for his escape from Quantrell, and he believed that all of Professor Cheval's kindness, all that good man's unselfish efforts in his behalf would have ended in smoke had not they, with the college secret societies behind them, put in an opportune appearance on the railroad embankment the night he left Cedar Crest.

And he felt very grateful in consequence, and was inclined to share with them all of the almost magical success that had come to him since.

But, notwithstanding this, he could not make Fatty's readiness to gamble with these gentlemen dovetail with his denunciation of them. How he

could so dislike and also be convivial with them he could not understand.

He had been quick, as remarked in preceding pages, to notice the simplicity and scrupulous cleanliness of the men, tents, buildings and grounds, in camp and garrison. The excellent care they took of their horses, the directness with which everything was done, and the prevailing air of combined bluntness, courtesy and straightforwardness. All these had won his respect.

Many things he had observed critically, which he might have overlooked entirely, had it not been for Fatty's adverse comment, and as a result, much against his inclination, he began to doubt Fatty himself. "He talks through his hat!" he mentally ejaculated.

Unfortunately, a blunder of Fatty's precipitated Moultrie's departure from the club-room, after entangling him as well as Hercules, seriously and lamentably in a drunken row.

Very evident symptoms of fatigue, or too much imbibition, or both, was manifesting itself among the party at the card-table, when the officer, who had earlier in the evening stared so strangely at Moultrie, turning in his chair to call for a cigar, again caught his eye.

For a moment only the officer looked steadfastly, and then, with an insulting leer arose unsteadily to his feet and approached him.

Fatty, who had observed this (all but the leer), with the usual officiousness of some semi-drunken men, arose at the same time, with the object of introducing the two. He was nearer to Moultrie than the officer, and with an affectionate gush, spluttered out,

"Major Blondin, let me introduce you to my dear old friend and school-chum, Mr. DeKalb."

He would have added more as he threw his arm around Moultrie, but, with a lofty sweep of his hand

and a supercilious toss of his head, the officer said, haughtily :

"I don't want to know him, sir! He is only a shopkeeper, and that is all I want to know of him." Whereupon, before anyone could interfere, before anyone had even imagined what he had arisen from his seat for, he pulled Moultrie's nose until it bled.

Moultrie, on his part, quick as a flash, with his clenched fist planted a retaliatory blow square on the offender's mouth, dislocating his knuckles in the act, and knocking out two of Blondin's teeth.

The major staggered against the billiard table from its effects, and then, with a terrible oath, rallied and sprang like an infuriated tiger toward Moultrie, whose eyes were blazing with indignation, as he awaited his onset.

This, fortunately, was intercepted by Hercules, who grasped the officer about the waist in his powerful arms, and laid him, helpless as a struggling infant, prone upon the billiard table.

We will draw the curtain on this disgraceful scene.

At a few minutes before nine o'clock the next morning Moultrie presented himself at his friend's cottage, and was glad to see Hercules looking so fresh and feeling so easy, after this first eventful night of his introduction to life at a frontier fort.

Producing a decanter of whiskey, the host invited his visitor to take an "eye-opener" before breakfast, which Moultrie politely declined.

This however did not deter Hercules from doing so, as he spoke the usual military toast,

"HOW!" Which is the Indian word for "Your health—"

And emptied his glass.

A troubled expression flitted over the beautiful face of his wife, as he did it.

Not a word was spoken by either Moultrie or Hercules of the club-room occurrence of the previous night, and breakfast passed pleasantly, with

bright sallies from the gentlemen, and charming piquant railleries from the hostess, during a running cross-fire of questions, comments and answers in reference to what had happened to each, and to their mutual friends, since they left college.

Just before sitting down to the table, Hercules again invited his guest to have a glass, but Moultrie again politely but firmly declined.

"Well I don't see but what I will have to drink for you then,"

Was the cheery protestation, and again the host emptied his glass, as his wife, in a half imploring, half indignant tone, exclaimed, with a sudden flash of her speaking eyes,

"I don't know why you need do double duty, especially of that kind!"

Hercules merely answered with a smile, as much as to say,

"Oh, it's all right; there is no harm done."

Momentary as was that flash from those eyes, before so tender, it did not escape Moultrie, and it was like revealing a new page or character, until now sealed and unsuspected, but distressingly painful. It gave the face an almost demoniac expression.

The sweet smile that pouted the pliant lips with lightning-like transition, an instant afterward, as well as the serenity, forced and unreal, that immediately settled on the whole face, in prompt response to her husband's beaming look, did not banish the impression that that momentary, sudden, fierce light in her eyes had made on Moultrie's mind, and he now noticed that there was a rigor about the mouth that he had not before observed.

It suggested disagreeable possibilities, if not actual but latent tendencies he had not dreamed of till then, and he asked himself,

"Is she only a beautiful and deceptive tigress, after all?" He saw that all soft outlines were forced. That she was calculating and selfish.

This lovely being had filled his dreams the night

before, and he had felt glad for Hercules, in his rare good fortune in securing, as a partner for life, one so gentle, beautiful and lovable, and he had said to himself that the great architect of the universe had evolved one of his finest masterpieces, in the union of these two hearts, for out of the stalwart husband and radiantly lovely wife, he had joined those two keystone features of perfection in social architecture, *beauty* and *strength.*

"Now," he wondered, "was the foundation on sand?"

Would she win his grand friend by kindness and devotion, and make him the superb man he was capable of becoming, or would she, by nagging and impatience and the too frequent showing of her claws, drive him to desperation and ruin? Would she be what that flash seemed to foretell?"

Quien sabe?

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT MODEL TRAVELING CARRIAGE.

TIME rolled on, and days passed into weeks, before Moultrie found himself able to return to the canyon.

Meanwhile his mail was forwarded to him by a circuitous route, and his heart palpitated with undisguised pleasure as he read Mrs. Poinsett's "slip," enclosed in Bertha's letter, in which she consented to take charge of the hotel at the mines.

He caught himself wondering if Bertha had changed much, and in imagination he felt the pressure of her little hand in his again.

Now that Mrs. Poinsett *would* come, he thought, among other things, that it behooved him to prepare for her comfortable transit across the plains.

He was something of a draughtsman, and that very evening set to work on designs for a model traveling carriage that would be a modern bed-chamber and breakfast room, with all their needed appointments complete, as well as a most comfortable and cosy vehicle withal.

He didn't let the grass grow under his feet, but, as soon as the plans and specifications were finished, he sent them by mail to a famous St. Louis builder of army carriages, and besides a copy retained for himself, sent one to Mrs. Poinsett, with a long, explanatory letter that entered minutely into a description of every detail of it, and the object and reasons therefor, and contained as well, numerous timely suggestions regarding her preparations for the trip.

He also informed her that he would meet the overland wagon train, which she would take after leaving the cars at the railroad terminus, a couple of days before it would start for the mines.

He would have occasion to do this, he said, as the freighters would have a large and valuable invoice of his goods in their charge, about the careful loading of which he was very anxious.

The box of the carriage he had designed was to be, in build and dimensions, something like a Dougherty spring wagon, but considerably lighter, somewhat longer, and of the very best material as to strength, elasticity and toughness. The running gear was to be of the most superior quality, regardless of cost, and the trimmings and upholstery both expensive and durable.

The strong, soft curtains were to be lined with morocco leather pockets, some deep, others shallow, conveniently arranged for small articles, and narrow, thick panels, inset with strips of very heavy plate-glass mirror, "impossible to break," he wrote, were to serve as door posts on either side for the carriage doors.

The backs of the seats were to be secured to the seat-beds by stout hinges, and another section in

front, that hung down like a flap or valance, was to be attached, in like manner, to both seats.

The two seats, facing each other, when arranged for travel, would be held in place by small, sliding bolts under them, on either side, and could be moved, when these bolts were drawn, toward each other far enough to allow the backs to fall down to a horizontal. The flaps could then be raised to a similar position, filling in the intervening space, and be adjusted, by means of ingeniously contrived props, whereupon a most inviting and luxurious mattress would be formed, the whole length of the inside of the carriage, as both seats, seat-backs and flaps were to be stuffed with the best of mattress hair.

The floor was to be carpeted with thick Turkey or Persian carpet, laid over a heavy waterproof lining, and an ample supply of velvet carriage rugs had been ordered.

Over the driver's seat—which was to be outside and forward, separated by an adjustable curtain—there was to be an adjustable awning.

Other blue and green striped awnings were provided for either side of the carriage, to be detachable, and put in place by means of iron rods run through thick, wire eyes on top of the carriage, and additionally supported by detachable arms at the sides.

These would form a delightful canopy, shutting out the sun on either side, when the curtains were raised, and on pleasant days would enhance the luxury of carriage travel across the plains.

Under both the seats were to be compartments into which pillows, sheets and toilet articles could be stowed, and under the driver's seat there was to be carried a block tin wash-bowl, soap-box and small papier-mache water-bucket.

On top of the carriage was to be a thin hickory panel, braced by stout cross-pieces, and supplied with brass eyes, inset at each corner, which could be taken down and adjusted to small detachable hooks

on either side, at the doorway, inside, to be used as a washstand.

Everything, indeed, to make the vehicle a complete ladies' boudoir on wheels was in Moultrie's elaborate plan.

By means of hooks, at the four, top corners, another panel, just the length and width of the space between the doors, was to be secured inside the carriage, between the seats and overhead, which in its turn could be detached and placed in position, lower down, when needed, forming a cozy little dining table, with the seats on either side.

Breakfast and dinner spreads made to order and of proper size, with napkins to match, were to be carried in the mess-chest, with the dishes on the trunk-rack in rear, or, with groceries, etc., in the lightly loaded freight and commissary wagon that was to always, on the march, accompany this luxuriously appointed traveling van. The trunk-rack was to be fitted with a staunch, water-proof, lavender-colored cover, that would not draw the sun's heat, and would be impervious to the wildest rain storm.

Having dispatched all his correspondence referring to this wonderful vehicle, interlarding all the hints he could think of, as to preparations for their trip across the plains, Moultrie gave redoubled attention to the problem presented in his new post-tradership venture.

He took frequent horseback rides, and had long conferences with Mr. Olds, Fatty and Ysleta.

It would be a good idea, he believed, to have an extensive ranch near by, since the natural advantages were most excellent and the different markets, the old ones already secured, and new ones, in prospect, which he must open up, lay on divergent lines.

The scanty knowledge among eastern capitalists, of the exhaustless resources of the country, in this direction, and the realization that he was well fixed to the fore with ample means, and opportunity

thoroughly in hand, to control those resources, was also matter of much gratification to him.

Furthermore, it was never the case, he had ascertained, that the Indians were simultaneously on the war path in all sections, and as a consequence some avenues would be always open. And to establish the base for new ones, at this point, would, he thought, be the part of wisdom.

These considerations were powerful in forcing into the background the minor scruples that had troubled him relative to his military post traderships.

As far as possible he would remedy what he found wrong, in that direction, he said to himself, but that undertaking would be of minor importance, and the position would give him advantages in the other ventures, which he could not, and must not ignore.

Therefore he concluded he would not only stay, but would make as big a thing out of staying as possible.

He therefore resolved to make the post-trader's store a big supply depot in every particular, for that section of country, and to this end he at once busied himself with Mr. Olds, making up extensive orders for goods, or occupied himself scouring the adjacent county with Señor Ysleta, to learn, by personal observation, all he could of its resources and availability.

Meanwhile he had excellent opportunities for studying more fully the peculiarities of that isolated community, and the subject grew very fascinating to him.

One thing especially attracted his notice, and that was the all-absorbing topic of prospective promotion, especially among the younger officers.

To enter on their army registers the deaths, dismissals and retirements, occurring from time to time, seemed to be of more importance to *some* than the well-being of the commands under their charge.

It was their monotonous and never ending theme.

And several of them kept their registers carefully

marked with the names of those likely to be retired soon—either because of long service, old age or—The Devil. No Wall Street broker ever watched the fluctuations of stocks more closely than they watched and revised this data.

When news was received of death, or of disaster to some older officer, involving the loss of his commission, condolence for the afflicted family seemed of last and least consideration, and who had by the calamity, "gone up a peg," of first and greatest importance to know.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN ABORTIVE PICNIC.

On a certain sunlit morning orders were received from the War Department proclaiming a holiday in commemoration of a great event, and directing its observance. And a national salute with artillery was ordered.

Not far from the fort, a large stream meandered through a wide stretch of undulating prairie, treeless, and carpeted with a growth of tall sedge-grass, for miles upon miles. Along its banks was a scant fringe of seedy-looking cotton-wood trees, and the muddy water was populous with innumerable suckers, bullheads, cat and other varieties of the more common species of fish.

Thither a sorosis of the married ladies of the garrison secretly resolved they would inveigle their lords and husbands at an early hour; for a holiday, they well knew, meant with those lords aforesaid not so much an interim of rest as a period more or less of devoted, protracted and persistent observance at the shrine of Bacchus.

The prospects for this sylvan picnic seemed decidedly propitious.

There were several private carriages and army ambulances at the post (Moultrie's elegant van was counted in, as a matter of course), and cavalry horses in plenty for those who preferred to ride on horseback.

Mrs. Swimm, wife of the commanding officer, with petite Mrs. Gabbler as a sort of adjutant, assumed command. And Mrs. G——, without consulting anyone but her self-constituted chief, proceeded with dispatch to assign the occupants of the several carriages that were to be used in the fête.

"There must be some head,"

Mrs. G—— had said. She herself was really chief engineer, with Mrs. S—— as dummy figure-head.

"And who is better than the Colonel's wife?"

Whereupon everyone—all the ladies—had responded, "Of course!" How dare they do otherwise?

And as the little woman flew around, perfecting arrangements on the carte blanche of Mrs. S——, Mrs. Durant said:

"Oh, m-y!" in a drawling tone.

"She reminds me-ah of a little t-u-g-boat, ah, she-ah flies a-b-o-u-t s-o-o lively, don't you know. I think I shall nev-ah forget the weally delightful way a de-ah little tug, in Chicago river, once seized the wopes, great big wopes they were too, of big ships, and then pulled awah at the ships, until it got them out into the lake."

"Just yanked them out, away out of sight, at short notice!" suggested Gaunt, with a guying manner, that caused Mrs. Durant to subside instantly. "Hawwible wech!" sub-voce.

Moultrie had been invited to join the party, and had been asked to contribute his carriage, but no intimation had been conveyed to him that Mrs. Gabbler, in her masterful fashion, had already assigned

it, without consulting him, to certain parties she had selected, and had provided a seat for himself in her own ambulance.

Circumstances, too, conspired to keep him in ignorance of this fact up to the very last moment.

Mrs. G—— had sent to the store later on to inform him of his billet with her, but he was out on the prairie somewhere, with Mr. Olds, Lieutenant Hercules and Señor Ysleta, when the messenger reached there.

"Tell your wife," Moultrie had said to Hercules, as they dismounted from their horses, at Mrs. Olds' door, after their return, about eight o'clock the same evening,

"That I will esteem it a favor if she will take my carriage for to-morrow, and invite whom she wishes to ride with her. I, myself, will drive and my servant will go on horseback, to look after the team at the rendezvous."

Shortly after this they all sat down to a late but bountiful dinner, and did not separate until half-past eleven o'clock. At that hour no one in the fort was moving save the sentries.

Hercules proceeded directly to his quarters, but, as luck would have it, being in a pensive mood, forgot to communicate his message from Moultrie to his wife until after they had retired.

She was greatly pleased at the thoughtful kindness, but somewhat worried, because the acknowledged master of ceremonies, Mrs. Gabbler, had notified her of a different assignment.

In consequence she questioned the propriety of accepting her friend's offer.

"Confound Mrs. Gabbler, she don't own you, that I am aware of! She is altogether too officious, she can go to thunder!"

Hercules replied hotly.

"I'll bet fifty dollars she has arranged to monopolize Moultrie, and take him into her own carriage, with one of the young ladies—Miss Swimm, no

doubt! and Moultrie won't have it. He'll drive his own team."

"Who shall you have ride with you?" he asked the next morning at breakfast, quietly.

Mrs. Hercules pondered a few moments and then mentioned Miss Leclerque and two other ladies whose husbands were infantry lieutenants and, therefore, without vehicles and not entitled to keep horses.

Hercules donned his cape and forage cap and called on them at once, and found they were delighted with the change he so auspiciously proposed, from the hospital ambulance, to which the little lady of whom Mrs. Durant said a steam tug-boat was the prototype, had assigned them. They were profuse in their thanks and in their enconiums of his lovely wife.

Great, however, was the consternation of that petite and busy, ubiquitous Mrs. Gabbler, when she found her plans had been so unexpectedly and signally defeated, and immense the satisfaction of Hercules, when he heard her protesting to Moultrie, in his wife's presence, that "she had selected him as her guest and had provided a seat for him beside the adorable Miss Swimm."

Moultrie politely thanked her but did not budge. He was master of his own equipage, and felt he had a right to order it as he was disposed.

Mrs. Ponsonbys and Mrs. Durant declined, at first, to go at all, so sorely were they disappointed in not occupying the best carriage in the garrison, for Moultrie's was such. And Mrs. Gabbler had assigned those ladies *the best seats* in it. They were finally accommodated, however, one riding with Mrs. Swimm, and the other in the vacant seat that had been intended for Moultrie, beside Miss Swimm, in Mrs. Gabbler's carriage. It had been arranged that the party should start at five o'clock, but it really did not get off until after six.

Hercules rode a beautiful and powerful dappled gray charger, over sixteen hands high.

Fatty Forbush reposed his ample breadth on the forward seat beside Moultrie.

A lovelier early morn could not have been desired.

Aurora's rosy fingers had opened its glittering gates showering the fort, the fields and the old Indian trails and sylvan depths with myriads of joyous, dancing sunbeams.

All nature, in fact, had awakened with gladness.

The sweet odor of new cut hay and countless wild flowers at dawn, freighted the clear atmosphere.

Dewdrops, innumerable, sparkled on grass and foliage, looking like numberless diamonds.

The meadow-lark, the robin and the little brown thrush caroled their melodious matins, and wolves and wild-cats, crest-fallen, slunk away to their lairs, as if afraid, or ashamed to face the opening eye of The God of Day. And how imperial he looked, rising from his dazzling, golden couch in the horizon of the Orient.

And the fresh morning air was so delightful and bracing. It put new life into everyone of the party. And all, save perhaps, the disgruntled ones, who had been so sorely disappointed, were in the gayest of spirits.

Fatty's bright sallies kept everyone in a roar. And sparkling retort and repartee was the order when they started out so joyously. But their return was not happy. "It was a horse of another color," Fatty ventured to remark, *sotto voce*.

At the appointed rendezvous the horses were lariated out on the wild prairie grass, the fishing tackle put in trim, and the anticipated pleasure of the day begun. A generous hamper, and cigars from Major Rigby, Moultrie and Hercules, were supplied to the guard of troopers that had come with the jolly picnickers. Indians were liable to drop in suddenly at any time on any unprotected party. Hence the presence of this guard. Fortunately no Indians appeared to disturb their well-planned pleasure. But alas! other unforeseen, exasperating

events, or incidents probably, they should be called, did.

Hours rolled by, and the fish, obstinate, sleepy, suspicious, wary, or by some other means to their full desire fed, refused to "bite." Meanwhile the pocket flasks, privately, secretively brought, were "slyly discussed," and then the ladies' lunch baskets were clandestinely raided, and ruthlessly, heartlessly robbed of their most succulent and tempting morsels.

The alarming extent of the forays, however, and the woful, dismal wreck that resulted, none of the dear ladies were aware or suspicious of.

That their husbands had "foraged," to the extent of a sandwich or two, to relieve a feeling of goneness, or faintness, was the utmost any of them suspected.

Judge then of the towering indignation, and the hearty disgust, when they beheld the real, awful and deplorable wreck and ruin that had really been wrought!

"Oh dear! my jelly is all gone!" And——"

"What a shame! There is not a crumb of my orange cake left!" Exclaimed one victim.

And numerous other lamentations filled the air, and multiplied, as the first discoverer of these graceless inroads was reinforced by other bankrupts in the same line.

"It is just heartless, and too mean for anything," said another.

"Unprincipled!" exclaimed still another.

"Too contemptible and just too terrible!" chimed in a fourth. And, as they all in turn discovered their loss, they glared around, looking to wreak their vengeance on their husbands, and, at last, saw the guilty culprits, down stream, on the river bank, skulking behind trees and unfeelingly laughing at them, from a safe distance. "The unfeeling wretches!" cried Mrs. Swimm.

And everyone echoed, "The unfeeling wretches!"

"Guard Mounting" took place, in the garrison, regularly, every morning, at nine o'clock.

Underneath the pompous marching, fine music and spectacular features that characterized it, there was, relatively, about the same amount of utility in the ceremonial one finds buried below the red tape, that hides the really excellent business methods of the several bureaux, of the government executive departments.

Stripped of its spectacular features it is a wise and needful preliminary inspection of prospective sentinels, and, as a spectacle, very pretty.

At a given signal, squads, detailed to do guard duty for the next twenty-four hours, march to the cadence of the music by the band, to a previously designated rendezvous, on the parade ground, the flanks of which are designated by two small flags called markers.

Here they are carefully inspected, in a very formal and pretty manner, one by one, by an officer, an adjutant or commander of the guard, to see if the right number has reported from each company, and also to ascertain if their arms and accoutrements are in good order, and the requisite amount of ammunition carefully housed in their cartridge boxes. Perfect cleanliness of person and clothing is also exacted.

The ladies among our early picnickers were sufficiently disgusted because the fish would not bite. But when they discovered the demoralization of their elegant lunches, they were, as stated, completely beside themselves.

"Oh dear! let's go home!" said Mrs. Ponsonbys, almost ready to cry. That was just what their husbands wanted to do.

"That I will, at once!" Mrs. Swimm answered, red in the face with rage. And she kept her word.

Of course, everyone else followed.

And just as the music was sweetly playing, "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and the soldiers were marching to Guard-Mounting, the carriages drove into the garrison, bringing back the party that had started

out so joyously three hours earlier, to be gone all day. "Guard-mounting" was breakfast hour for officers.

"Heigho! Man's better half proposes but sometimes the lunch fiend disposes,"

Said Hercules, with a smile, as he kissed his pretty wife on reaching home, and promised not to take a single drink that day. And he kept his promise.

Notwithstanding the pleasant drives, the periodical and frequent afternoon concerts from the stand erected for the band in the centre of the parade ground, and the occasional hops and almost daily croquet parties, the time passed at that Indian, frontier military post would have been exceedingly tedious for Moultrie had he been as idle, by half, as the officers.

Of course he was bouyed up, every now and then, whenever he had a chance to take a little peek, on the sly, at the photo he had, "with his fifteen dollars in his inside pocket." His photo of Bertha. That was Bertha's scandalously favorite song. So *he* always sang it whenever he looked at that same photo.

Notwithstanding the failure and the general bad feeling incident to this picnic event among the others, Moultrie extracted from it, for himself, some considerable real pleasure, and became so much better acquainted with some of the ladies of the garrison that his opinion of army people was favorably modified.

One afternoon, several days previous, he had returned saturated, after a severe rain-storm, from a prospecting trip to Antelope Springs, and had dismounted at the most remote corner of the Fort.

The weather had cleared; the sun was shining, and his clothes were steaming.

Passing down the four feet wide walk in front of the officers' quarters, he met three unknown ladies, followed by a lieutenant, who did not recognize him in his storm suit, and he was forced to step off the walk into the mud, to let them pass, or be rude.

He wondered if they treated all people who did not happen to be well dressed in that manner.

At the picnic he was seated on some wraps on the grass, in a group with Mrs. Hercules, Miss Swimm, Miss Leclerque and a handsome young infantry officer, chatting gaily when Mrs. Gabbler came up.

"Now this is what I call nice," she said; "I wish I could take a sketch of you all, just as you are seated.

"It would make an interesting picture, and a suggestive one too.

"I don't quite know whether Mr. De Kalb looks as though he was planning a runaway match with Mrs. Hercules or has been pouring soft nonsense into Miss Swimm's ear. But there is no mistaking the telegraphic glances of Lieutenant Blank and Miss Leclerque.

"You're looking too utterly utter to deceive anyone, Lieutenant; I do wish I could paint your look on canvas. Why ain't I an artist?"

"Because your education was neglected," returned the lieutenant, dryly.

"You *are* an artist, in word painting, my dear," said Mrs. Hercules, very sweetly.

"Am I, though? Oh thanks! But you've bewitched Mr. De Kalb, that's plain to see. I don't believe Miss Swimm has a ghost of a show. Have you, Miss Swimm?"

And Miss Swimm blushed, as nearly as was possible for her.

"We'll have to get Lieutenant Hercules to lock up his pretty wife, if this thing continues," and Mrs. Hercules kindly advised Mrs. Gabbler to get someone to take her down-stream a little way, and shoot her or drown her.

"No," said Lieutenant Blank,

"Better get her to hire a hall, a cheap one will do, and invite us all to go and see her hang herself."

"Let me alone for hanging myself," returned Mrs. G——.

"Meanwhile, please don't use my best shawl for a

footstool, under the mistaken idea that it belongs to the future Mrs. Blank."

"I use my dogs for footstools, sometimes," replied the lieutenant, a little too acidly to be pleasant. He didn't like the G——s.

"'Therefore, the future Mrs. Blank's shawl, and the future Mrs. Blank herself, should take warning,' you ought to add," and she looked straight at Miss Leclerque, who blushed beautifully and evidently saw something very interesting in the grass at her feet.

"I think you're perfectly awful!" ventured Miss Swimm, timidly, with a slight lisp, trying to look very brave.

"Do you think so, Mr. Moultrie?" queried the little woman.

"Oh, yes—perfectly awful *nice*," he answered, diplomatically.

"Well, I'll have to leave you people, I see," she replied, with a bright, satisfied smile.

"You are just utterly incorrigible, and too much too-too for anything." Then, as a parting shot, turning to Miss Leclerque,

"Shall I send the chaplain, dear?"

"For what?" asked Miss Leclerque, quite innocently.

"Why, to pray for you, of course, you little stupid," replied Mrs. Gabbler, tripping off with a merry laugh.

"My husband says that wives are tyrants," said Mrs. Hercules, with a wretchedly feigned attempt to be jocular. "That they must know and reign over their husbands' innernmost thoughts, have full accounts of their dreams, know how many steps they take to cross the parade ground, and dictate to them when they shall sneeze, and when they shall laugh, or be miserable."

"And what do you say?" whispered Moultrie.

"Oh, I have nothing whatever to say," with a sickly smile.

Somehow no one laughed, but on the contrary, everyone felt depressed after this, and Mrs. Hercules rose and went for her lunch basket.

Fatty Forbush, just coming up, was sent in search of Hercules.

It was at this juncture that the robbery of the hampers was discovered.

That of Mrs. Hercules had not been disturbed.

During the discussion of the good things contained in her handsome and capacious basket, the party was joined by the two infantry ladies who had ridden in Moultrie's carriage as the guests of Mrs. Hercules, and whose husbands were away at an outpost camp, and Moultrie declared to Mrs. Olds that he was charmed with them. And she replied,

"Certainly, you ought to be. They mind their own business."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BACHELOR OFFICERS' HOP; THE INDIAN RAID; MOULTRIE HOMEWARD BOUND.

ONE evening, shortly after the incidents just narrated there was sudden, unusual excitement in the garrison because of the near approach of a party of daring, hostile Indians.

It was over two years since any of them had been so bold.

A cordon of outlying camps had kept them away.

Moultrie had completed his business there, and had only three days before sent Señor Ysleta with his carriage, by way of Centipede Canyon, to the railroad terminus to join the wagon-train, under escort of which the ladies would proceed to their new Colorado home.

Forbush had been duly installed as his agent at

the fort, had taken up his billet with the Olds family, and was liked very much by them, as well as by everyone. He had grown quite politic of late, and kept his mouth shut.

Moultrie had chartered the overland stage several days in advance, proposing to monopolize it, take numerous buffalo robes for bedding, and make a quick trip to the nearest railroad station south, as cosily as possible, traveling day and night continuously for over one hundred hours. Then by a wide detour by cars he could speedily reach Mrs. Poinsett and Bertha at the end of the track on the railroad further north, before they would transfer to carriage travel.

No lark was up earlier of mornings than he, during these days of preparation for his long trip, and no one more blithesome and light-hearted.

He calculated that he would reach his objective point three or four days ahead of time, and would find his own outfit, with Señor Ysleta in waiting, already there.

The programme had been, at last, very materially changed from that proposed by Mrs. Poinsett, and on arrival at the railroad terminus, Bertha was to become Mrs. Moultrie De Kalb, if a parson could be found to tie the knot.

And the bridegroom—prospective—had taken great care to provide for that most important contingency.

Her mother's property had been put into the hands of a reliable agent in St. Louis, recommended by Moultrie, and she was coming on to take charge of the hotel for her daughter, to whom Moultrie would deed it, among other bridal gifts.

On the evening before he was to start from the fort to carry out these pleasant plans, a couple of jolly bachelor officers, in his honor, threw open the cottage they jointly occupied, and gave a hop.

And such a cottage! It was a gem of a bachelors' den.

The ladies had all along been perfectly wild to explore it.

And the liege lords and masters of the married ones had told their wives fabulous tales of its enchanting interior.

The zither, mandolin, guitar, and banjo were frequently overheard issuing from it, in accompaniment to manly voices, in solos and choruses.

Trophies from Indian camps, that had been surprised and raided, as well as trophies of the chase, photographs of beautiful women and distinguished men, souvenirs of spoons, and "favors" from numerous hops, cartoons, both witty and sarcastic, military trappings and implements of the hunt, prints of battle and fishing scenes. All these, and many other things, in unarranged miscellany, crowded the walls profusely, and made one think of the abode of the knights of medieval ages, remodeled and lavishly embellished with "all modern improvements."

A generous sideboard lent an especial fascination to this delightfully appointed "Bachelors' den," to those who had the good fortune to have entrée.

And oh! How the ladies, precious dears!

Did dote on Moultrie when he, Aladdin-like, through the medium of this farewell hop, was about to give them the "open sesame" to that wonderful "den."

All they had seen of it, through the thick lattice work of flowering vines, was what was visible on the front and rear porch, and the "Baby Buffalo" in the side yard.

A round table, wolf and puma rugs, Mexican grass hammocks, newspapers and novels, recklessly scattered about, flag-bottomed, extension easy chairs and long Turkish pipes, with dantily embroidered tobacco pouches and smoking caps—only these things had been revealed to them.

But yes! Two more objects of interest they had discovered, or rather encountered, whenever any,

animated by a spirit of Paul Pryism, had sought to penetrate its innermost recesses.

And they were a vigilant "dog-robber," who stood in the way of their progress as sturdily as the rock of Gibraltar, and a fierce, half-bull, half-wolf dog.

"I'm just going to see the inside of those quarters!" declared Mrs. Gabbler.

And Mrs. Durant rolled her eyes heavenward and ejaculated,

"Y-a-a-s! If you can, you mean, of course, to be s-u-a-h." Now imagine a genuine "rural" trying a metropolitan society-McAllister-four-hundred-utterance of that monosyllable, "Yes."

But Mrs. G——. did not get there.

The hop was at its height; and was the most enjoyable one Moultrie had ever at any time attended.

Suddenly, an orderly entered the ball-room, in an excited manner, and, after formally saluting, said something to the commanding officer that caused him to hurriedly make his exit.

The married ladies gathered around the orderly, asking a dozen questions at once, and the quadrille, then in progress, was virtually broken up, although the music went on, and the younger people tried desperately to keep the dance going.

The soldier stood like a statue, before the volleys of queries fired at him, but uttered not a word, and was forced, before the importunate ladies had cornered him into an explanation, to hurry to the door in response to the sharp, quick, imperative summons:

"*Orderly!*"

Uttered, commandingly, by Colonel Swimm.

While this unusual occurrence was being discussed, with bated breath, the colonel was on his way to his office, whither his adjutant, Lieutenant Gabbler, a long, thin-limbed, middle-aged man, with a rolling walk, much like an old tar, had preceded him.

Arriving there, he discerned, by the rays of the full moon, just risen, two citizens, frontier rangers, in their shirt sleeves.

One of them had his right arm in a sling, and was standing beside a chair, in which the other, a handsome young fellow, wearing a Mexican sombrero, sat, with a face as pale as death, and his buckskin shirt bosom saturated with blood.

The sergeant of the guard was with them, and said that they had ridden rapidly up to the sentinel, on the north face of the garrison, and had reported that they had escaped from a gulch, about twenty-five miles off, where a dozen or more citizens were hemmed in by an Indian war party, who had stolen some horses from a cattle ranch, about sixty miles up the country, and whose trail they were following when ambushed and "cut to pieces."

The colonel forthwith despatched his orderly, with instructions to his three remaining lieutenants of cavalry in the garrison, to report to him in person at his office at once.

He then directed the sergeant of the guard to conduct the wounded citizens to the hospital, and ask the doctor to dress their wounds, sending their horses meanwhile to the quartermaster's corral.

The musician of the guard was ordered at the same time to sound the sometimes alarming, and always spirited cavalry call,

"*Boots and Saddles!*"

And the sleepy troopers were forthwith aroused and marched in "double time," fully armed and equipped, from their barracks to the stables, to lead out and saddle their horses.

By this time the purport of the news, greatly exaggerated, as usual, had reached the ballroom, and wild consternation prevailed.

"Over five hundred Indians!

"Hovering, like so many mamelukes, or ravenous wild beasts, on the very outskirts of the garrison!"

Was the bold statement passed about from mouth to mouth, enlivened and embellished by sensational comments, characteristic of the differing dispositions of the different persons it reached.

The entire force in the fort for duty numbered less than one hundred men, forty-five of whom were detachments from the cavalry companies, at the camp heretofore described, who had been left behind to take charge of sick and surplus horses and other public property. The remainder of the troops were infantry soldiers belonging to companies engaged in building a military road about fifty miles south.

There was a general court martial in session at the time at the garrison, and Hercules, being a member of it, was the only reason for his presence there.

He would have much preferred to have been at the front with his company.

Beaustrum was his first lieutenant.

The order from department headquarters, however, that convened the court in question, had detained him in garrison in spite of his wishes.

In an emergency such as the present one, Colonel Swimm was authorized to order Hercules, at the head of his detachment, to take the field, and, if the court martial was thereby left without a quorum, all it could do would be to adjourn from day to day until his return, or adjourn *sine die.*

Moultrie had arranged to start by stage the next morning.

It did not arrive however, and if it had, it would not have been allowed to proceed until after safety on its route ahead could have been fully assured.

Toward sunset the following day news came that it had been captured by the Indians and burned, and that two passengers and the driver had been killed and shockingly mutilated.

This Moultrie knew, at the best, would involve a delay of at least two days, as, even if the road was made safe for travel in a few hours, the next stage could not arrive and depart inside of that time.

Such an adverse incident coming so directly, concurrent with his intended and anxiously desired de-

parture, was a synchronism he worried over more than he himself was aware of.

His whole mind was absorbed with thoughts of Bertha, and if it had not been made from the best material by one of the best tailors, that inside pocket could not have withstood the terrible strain to which it was subjected. Somebody's photo suffered too.

He all along was incessantly comparing her with the other pretty girls he had met, and out of the process all her heretofore enumerated little faults, which by and by he felt sure he could persuade her to amend, faded into oblivion, and she loomed up in towering contrast a perfect angel! Faultless!

Suffice it to say, that the pasteboard that held the imprint of the face he loved so fondly, did not withstand the frequent kissings it received half as sturdily as the well made inside pocket afore-mentioned did the frequent removal and return of her likeness. And, finally, when glowing with life and love he met the original, the photograph—poor photograph—looked as though it had reached the outermost verge of the most ragged of all ragged edges.

How he did fume and fret as he waited for the permission of Colonel Swimm for the stage to proceed and lessen the distance between them. The brief delay seemed an endless age.

He was not a gushing young man, in the ordinary acceptation of that term. But he loved Bertha with all the passion and intensity of a strong character, and thrilled with pleasure when he thought of their approaching meeting, and of her as entirely and solely his own.

His wife! "Wife!" how sweet and sacred the word!

Therefore the thrusting of these deterring hours between his blissful expectations and their longed-for consummation, begot a bitterness of feeling foreign to his nature.

About 1 A. M., on the night of the alarm, all the

available cavalry were properly mounted and started for the relief of the "corraled" citizens.

Hercules rode in the van, on a powerful chestnut sorrel, magnificent looking in his splendid physique and well fitting campaign uniform.

His party had been gone three days when they returned empty-handed, having succeeded in driving the Indians out of the neighborhood only, and being unable to overtake or force them into a conflict, or even drop the booty in their possession.

On his arrival at the fort, he found Moultrie in readiness to take the stage, and waiting in front of Mr. Old's door to say good-bye.

At no time had the latter given to anyone in the garrison an intimation of the causes that prompted the circuitous route he was taking on his return to Colorado. Everyone thought his object business solely.

The road he had passed over in coming from there, was now safe, and swarming with troops, but no one questioned him as to his motives.

To Mr. Olds he had remarked his intention, if he should have the time to spare to take steps to expedite the shipment of the large stock of Merchandise ordered by mail for their joint store after which he said, he would switch off and join the overland train that was conveying other goods to Centipede Canyon and the mines; and Mr. Olds had interpreted his impatience at the delay in his departure, occasioned by the Indian raid, as natural to such a wide-awake business man in whose nature it was impossible to brook, with serenity any unexpected obstacle to or disarrangement of his plans.

To the more or less charming young ladies of the garrison, all of whom were madly ambitious for desirable matrimonial alliance, and who recognized in Moultrie a handsome, congenial, wealthy and eminently eligible young man, his sudden exit was a sore disappointment indeed.

They had counted on his stay among them at least three months longer.

Miss Swimm especially, who was a sort of female Narcissus, and had been "coached" to angle for desirable marriageable young men, was terribly chagrined that he should be so blind to what she considered her rare personal charms, and when he left for this trip to "*the jumping-off place*," as the end of the railroad was euphoniously called, vouchsafing no amorous glance, or warm squeeze of her hand, she felt as much neglected and woe-begone as did stricken Penelope when mighty Ulysses treated her impassioned and unsolicited wooing with such cool, and to her bitter imagining, heartless indifference.

Attired in a wealth of soft pink and white silk mull, and a bunch of wild roses nestling in her hair and bosom, she would sit long and sighingly before her flattering mirror, waiting for Moultrie to send his card, and wonder why the sweet image of herself, with which she fell so violently in love, could not inspire this very Lentulus with overpowering sentiments.

"But she never told her love," etc. Truth to say, "She wasn't that kind of a girl."

Miss Leclerque alone suspected her friend's passion.

And as she pitied, and sincerely wished to divert her thoughts, and was something of a vocalist and pianist, which the Swimms, both Madame and Miss, were not, she invited the young lady to visit her frequently, and listen to her instrumental rhythms and drink in the rapture of her sweet songs, while she viewed her own dear self, listlessly, yet lovingly, in their large pier glass.

Now, out on that remote frontier, in that barren and God-forsaken country, fit only for "savage beasts and still more savage men," not every captain's family could afford such a rare luxury as a pier-glass.

Lambrequins, portieres, carpets, mattings, rugs,

tapestries, valances, rich bedding and all other elegantly appointed household things that would endure, in long transit, crushing and rumpling most cruel, but like a bruised reed would not break, these things galore! Every one had.

But elegant, pier-glass mirrors!

Well, in this particular garrison, the Leclerques and the Rigbys only could boast their possession, and poor little Miss Swimm, who was such a chum of Miss Leclerque, used to go over to the latter's house, just to have a good, full, life-size, front and profile view of herself, because it could not be obtained elsewhere.

She would never have gone to the Rigbys for that purpose, no, never!

Miss Leclerque thought, indeed, that young De Kalb would be a splendid "catch," but somehow, he would not "Hook on to her bait," so she consoled herself with the consciousness that there were fully as many fine fish in the sea as were ever caught out of it.

And for her friend, who seemed to take her disappointment of Moultrie so much to heart, she felt the most earnest sympathy.

In justice it should be added that, although Miss L—— had taken a decided fancy to him, and, to quote Mrs. Rigby,

"Would marry on the drop of a hat,"

She had not thrown herself in his way in so many becoming costumes and charming poses as Miss Swimm had, nor in any other manner conspicuously.

Miss Wilbur looked at Moultrie like a scrupulously careful and timid child looks at something beautiful exhibited, in a strong glass case, with a placard attached,

"Please don't handle."

The innuendoes at this time, of a frisky, dapper, light-weight, country-bred, shoulder-strapped fellow, intensely self-conceited, annoyed Miss Leclerque exceedingly in this connection.

This fellow was utterly lacking in all of those lofty drifts that make so many military men admired by their own sex, and adored by the opposite.

He could profess decency more plausibly than anything in God's image she had ever encountered, and at the same time, according to the testimony of his comrades, could descend lower and wallow with more perfect satisfaction in the veriest depths of vulgarity than any being she had ever heard of in respectable society.

He had been several times severely reproved, and more than once roughly handled, for the too free indulgence of his penchant in this direction.

He never drank whiskey and seldom was at the club, but had been caught by soldiers and citizens in dens the heaviest drinkers and card-players, among the officers, had too much self-respect to enter.

He was known as Major Shaver, and was about five feet five inches in height, slender, and weighed perhaps one hundred and twenty pounds.

His hair was close-cropped and red, his face freckled and much elongated from the eyebrows to the chin. His unusually long upper lip was surmounted by a red moustache, his eyebrows were red and his eyes, considerably drawn down at the outer corners, were of a pale, light blue.

He was extremely disliked for his insufferable assumption and his Paul Pry disposition.

According to general estimate his wife was, par-excellence, a fit better-half.

She had been a widow for several years, at the time she had, so successfully, toyed with love's archery as to plant one of Cupid's darts in his heart.

Rumor said she had often expressed deep regret at thus recklessly playing with such dangerous weapons and she was quoted as protesting that she had fired the wayward and fatal barb only in fun.

Some listeners accredited these expressions as her protest against being included in the general dis-

favor with which she saw, but too plainly, her husband was viewed.

Whatever her motive, her stock in trade in that line was, even by the least conscientious of the garrison gossips, considered as private wares that ought not to be paraded on public exhibition.

Mrs. Shaver was particularly conspicuous for her beautiful complexion, the scrupulous and incessant care she took of it and the numerous "white lies" she retailed.

There was no wonderful lotion extant, no recipe that could be applied to the preservation of that complexion, that she did not know perfectly.

She was thoroughly versed in all its virtues and faults, all its perfections and deceptions, and knew to a dot when, how and where to use and when, how and where to avoid it.

She was most lavishly supplied with masks, or face gloves, for use by day, and the best approved ingredients for cosmetic applications at night.

In a sentence, what she didn't know about the mysteries of dermatology was not esteemed as worth knowing.

She never would allow a summer zephyr to pass unarrested across the apartment in her cottage that she styled her boudoir, lest its breath should tan her carefully doctored skin.

A "boudoir" in a Mexican mud-house was something no one else could rise to.

No sunlight was permitted to invade this sanctum, and she never ventured beyond its portals, except under extraordinary necessity, any hour from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.

But in the fading twilight, and by the uncertain rays of a student lamp, later on, in the evening, she would receive company, which consisted principally of the unmarried gentlemen of the garrison, with whom she delighted to flirt, assuring them, "upon honor," that she was just twenty-six years of age.

She was thirty-nine.

Moultrie had spent one evening on her front porch, but nothing could induce him to go there again.

He saw that Fatty was not alone in his condemnation of them, and could not help but contrast the husband with the several other truly splendid fellows he had met, who were officially his comrades, but were so socially only because that "courtesy which is considered indispensable to military discipline," made it obligatory.

And, furthermore, these two people gave Moultrie another opportunity to arraign Fatty for his absurdity in judging a whole community by its few black sheep, and other undesirable members.

"Why, my dear fellow! you make me positively doubt your ability to be fair with people at all, by your unjust, wholesale strictures!" he exclaimed, one day, in protest against one of Fatty's usual diatribes.

"You actually remind me of those shallow-brained, vapid, foreign tourists who come to America on a flying visit, and after a brief, cursive trip over the country, go home and rush into print immediately, in an abusive and ridiculously inaccurate description of our customs, characteristics and general make up.

"Let every tub stand on its own bottom! Give every fellow his just dues." And don't be illiberal. Don't call a whole family cross-eyed and cranky because one of the girls is so."

CHAPTER XXVI.

HERCULES IN HOT BUT FRUITLESS PURSUIT OF THE INDIANS.

MRS. SHAVER frequently joined her husband in making fun of Miss Leclerque on account of Moultrie. Not that there had been aught in Moultrie's conduct to warrant anything of the kind, but simply because it teased the young lady, and Mrs. Shaver was decidedly jealous of Miss Leclerque's superior accomplishments, talent and refinement.

There is no doubt but that, of the several unmarried women at the garrison, Miss Leclerque was, by far, the most attractive, and also the most amiable and cultured, and hence a veritable eyesore to this vain matron, who saw herself thrust into the background, whenever her fresh and girlish, but unintentional rival, appeared in the same circle.

Her real motive in seeking to ridicule her was made apparent, however, by her eagerness, and she lost caste with everybody as a result, in spite of Miss Leclerque's seeming helplessness. A suspicion by and by arose that she was equally as coarse as her husband, because of her boisterous merriment over his vulgar bantering of the young lady.

To the latter, in fact, the matter became so annoying that she finally dropped her informal evening visits to the Shavers altogether.

She, in common with others, had been going there because Madame had managed to make it a sort of every evening rendezvous and headquarters for the young officers, and because she always found her friend Miss Swimm there.

The petite Major's sallies were always of doubtful propriety, and, though not fully understood by the innocent young girl, were sufficiently intelligible,

taken in connection with the laughter and responses they provoked, to make her face, more than once, crimson, with illy-suppressed mortification.

Shortly following the accidental elevation of a powerful political friend, whom Shaver had efficiently served in earlier years in the cesspools of metropolitan primaries, the Major was transferred to a higher field of duty.

The hand of his political patron was plainly visible in the matter, and although "the boost" that took him from that oasis in an alkali desert—the garrison we have described—to a beautiful city, fanned by breezes from the Atlantic, was undeserved on the score of military merit, his departure was the source of heartfelt rejoicing to all, but to no one more than Miss Leclerque.

But the grievous injustice of his promotion over the heads of many older and infinitely better officers, officers of long years of faithful service and brilliant records, was a bitter pill to swallow.

No one denied Shaver's shrewdness, or the fact that he largely owed his great success to his skillful manipulation of his exceptionally favorable political opportunities, but that shrewdness was known to be merely low cunning, shrewdness of the lower species.

And as for professional capacity and exceptionally long or distinguished service, not one of such claims could be offered in support of his preferment.

In none of these respects was he more than the peer of the least deserving in his own grade in the army, and fell even below a majority of those in the grade next lower. He had had almost constantly, throughout his entire period of service, a soft berth, involving neither hardship, danger, nor any considerable responsibility, but all the while bestowing extra fat emoluments.

Moultrie was glad of the return of Hercules in time to say good-bye, and also took occasion to warn him against Major Blondin, whose threats to "Fol-

low until he had fired him out," had reached him opportunely, but without his seeking, during Hercules' brief absence from the post.

Moultrie talked until the stage driver said he must get in, or he would have to drive on without him, detailing little pleasantries that had characterized some of his farewell calls the night before.

Then, tossing his hand-bag and wraps inside (where there were no other passengers), he mounted to the box and seated himself beside the driver, who at once whipped up and drove off.

With the exception of an assistant agent at one of the three stage stations he passed, no traveling companion joined him for one hundred and twenty-five miles.

This assistant rode only about thirty miles over the cactus-dotted stretch, from one to another station on the line.

Greatly to his delight Moultrie found the different drivers, especially the first one, very chatty and quite intelligent regarding the features and resources of the country through which they passed, and from them he gleaned much valuable information not heretofore obtained.

Hercules had had a hard trip of it.

He was by no means an expert in Indian warfare, nor an experienced cavalry officer, and was too liable, in the pursuit of an object, to let the end absorb his attention to the neglect of needed provision for the means whereby to attain that end.

This had characterized his pursuit of the savages he had just failed to overtake and punish for their audacity in coming so close to the fort.

He had plunged forward at a trot, from the beginning, and in his eagerness to get ahead, had declined to halt an instant to allow his men to readjust saddles, blankets and equipments, greatly in need of readjusting. Blondin, ripe in the kind of experience needed, should have gone in command.

As a consequence of Hercules' precipitancy,

some of the horses had very sore backs before the point at which the Indians were first reported to be, was reached. And to allow the incurrence of such a state, at such an early stage, is about one of the worst things that could happen to one in his situation.

Here a brief halt of less than ten minutes was allowed for this work and a needed breathing spell, and even that would have been denied had it not been forced as the result of the parley Hercules held with the ambushed citizens, to whose release he had hastened.

They stated that the savages had been "visible up to within an hour."

A prompt search immediately followed for their trail, which was soon discovered leading off across the prairie, parallel with up the river.

If followed it would terminate at the reservation of a tribe reputed friendly, and who drew their rations and annuities with clock-like regularity from the appointed Indian agents of the government.

Hercules, reinforced by the citizens, kept close to this trail until darkness made it indistinguishable, when the entire party dismounted, unsaddled, and, after sentinels were posted, dropped down in the grass and fell asleep across it. Those who could, in spite of their thirst, which was intense and which there was no means to quench, as there was not a drop of water in the detachment, and none visible anywhere on the surrounding plain, and the men had eaten raw bacon and hard bread only since supper the preceding evening.

Next morning, at the first peep of dawn, with stiffened and sore muscles, the little party hurriedly saddled and mounted, and again took the trail of the savages.

Toward noon they reached the point where it crossed the river, and horses and men drank greedily of the dangerous and nauseating gypsum water,

They had hardly completed their crossing before its effects became manifest.

Everyone suffered more or less from it, and a halt became necessary, that consumed considerable valuable time.

To add to the annoyance the river, broad and usually shallow at this point, had risen quite high, and where the men did not have to actually swim their horses in crossing, they were in greater peril from the treacherous quicksand.

To his great chagrin, Hercules fared the worst of all in his command, from these causes.

He had entered the stream all right, and had managed his large and powerful, but thoroughly tired animal, skillfully, through the swimming and wading until nearly on solid ground, on the opposite bank, when his horse suddenly struck a considerable area of the very worst of quicksand, and went down completely out of sight, all save his tail, head and neck,

Hercules went in also up to his armpits, but fortunately his feet were, at the same moment, disengaged from the stirrups and he was thrown, forward and sidewise, entirely free from the saddle.

He clung tenaciously to the double rein, and to this fact was eventually due the saving of the life of his horse.

One of three or four troopers already on terra firma, threw him the end of a lariat to which was attached an iron picket pin, and Hercules managed, after some difficulty, to finally loop it around his waist.

In his struggles, the horse, free of his rider, had risen a little, but just as, by his cool-headed orders, a couple of careful and thoroughly obedient men had commenced pulling Hercules out, the brave young officer noticed the horse was again sinking.

He at once instructed another man, a fearless and agile little fellow, to pass a second lariat around his own body and, after giving the end to a comrade on

shore, rush in behind the horse and whip him with his halter strap to keep him in motion.

Meanwhile Hercules pulled with all his strength on his double rein, and shouted encouragement to the helpless and faithful animal until he was really hoarse.

The two men who had him in tow pulled at the same time, or slackened the lariat as he ordered, and, in the course of time, after a protracted struggle, horse and rider were safely landed on hard ground.

Hercules, with his usual indiscretion, would not wait until his clothes were thoroughly dry, but after a little manipulation of himself and his animal's coat, with horse brushes and bunches of grass, he immediately moved forward with his column, in hot pursuit of the redskins.

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon, they got into the midst of a large herd of Buffalo, and lost the trail completely.

This occurred just after the detachment had passed over a rise of ground, and at the same time they saw ahead a slender line of trees, indicating the presence of what, in that sparsely-timbered country, was considered a well-wooded stream.

"We'll meet 'em over thar, I reckon,"

Said the guide, pointing toward it, and Hercules immediately threw out skirmishers, disregarded the presence of the Buffalo entirely, and deploying into line of battle, pushed forward at a gallop.

Just before sunset the command reached the river and satisfied themselves in a little while that there were no Indians near.

Permission was then given three or four good buffalo hunters to try their skill on the herd, for the purpose of supplying the bivouac with fresh meat. And vedettes were thrown out, above and below in the timber, while the main party unsaddled and put their horses out to graze, under a strong guard.

Soon huge fires were blazing, and about dark the buffalo hunters returned very much jaded, leading

their horses, and with their saddles loaded down with the hind quarters and other choice parts of a couple of young cows.

Hercules was sleeping soundly when they arrived, but quickly aroused himself when he sniffed a smoking supper of buffalo steak, bacon and coffee. The first meal in twenty-four hours.

Taking a flask from his saddle pocket, which, to his credit be it said, he had held scrupulously in reserve until that moment, for an emergency, he called the little man who had whipped up his horse in the quicksand, and poured into his tin cup a liberal potation.

Then he placed the flask to his own mouth, and took a moderate drink himself.

It put new life into his veins, and as a supplement to his previous short but refreshing nap, prepared him for the self-imposed, all night vigilance that followed.

To all but himself and the guard, each of whom was on sentry duty two out of every six hours, it was a night of deep and thoroughly restful sleep.

But all the horses had sore backs. Some were very seriously chafed and lacerated.

Hercules was the only man in the command who slept not a wink until after the sun rose next morning.

The citizens who had accompanied him curled themselves up on the grass, and snored sonorously in successive crescendo, awakening every now and then from the noise they themselves made.

When they did awake, and rose to a sitting position and looked about, they were sure to see the stalwart form of Hercules, moving noiselessly among the horses, or in subdued converse with a sentinel.

At daybreak he ordered two daring and trusty soldiers to patrol up stream, a couple of miles, and another two downstream, in search for the trail.

Nothing would induce any one of the citizens to accompany these men, and with long faces they

prophesied the total annihilation of the entire little party if Hercules did not at once turn back, saying they were getting too deep into the hostile country for safety or discretion.

Hercules merely laughed, ordered his men to keep their carbines loaded, and then stretched himself on the grass to take a much-needed nap, until the patrolmen returned.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HERCULES SUCCUMBS, THE VICTIM OF MALICE AND CUNNING.

THE other two cavalry lieutenants, both of whom had gone up the road with another detachment for the protection of the stage and United States mail, and who were followed by half the Infantry in the garrison, returned the day before Hercules, having reached the point where the vehicle in question was waylaid and attacked just in time to bury the bodies of the massacred occupants by the light of its burning and almost consumed remains.

Nothing was left of the head of the stage driver save the face, and the cartilaginous portion of his nose had been cut off by blows from the butt end of a rifle.

He was found lying prone with the whole skull and back of the neck smashed in and the face imbedded in the soil from the force of the blows that had been dealt him.

He was stripped of every article of clothing except one stocking, and his back and limbs were horribly gashed.

He had evidently killed some of the Indians and

this was the punishment he received therefor, when finally overcome.

Among some of the southern tribes it is believed that to eat the flesh of a brave man is to impart his bravery to themselves. They had evidently ate the flesh cut from his buttocks like slices from a water-melon.

The two passengers were not so badly mutilated, and the inference was that they had not fought so desperately, or successfully at least, before being killed, as had the stage driver.

All were hastily buried in one grave, and a cairn of the loose stones lying about, was built over it for the protection of the bodies from wolves and other carnivora.

The detachment under Hercules were a sorry looking lot as they entered the garrison.

They had wasted or lost their rations and had unfitted their horses for further work for some time to come, and should have had at least one day's rations on hand on their return.

Colonel Swimm was very angry.

It was the first time in his brief military career that Hercules had been in command and the sole officer with a detachment. But his inexperience was not considered any palliation in the least, although it should have been.

He was condemned as though he had wantonly wrought this harm, and the condemnation of the commanding officer is nearly always the condemnation of all the contemptible sycophants who surround him and sneeze when he takes snuff.

The ladies who were jealous of Mrs. Hercules were filled with delight and made spiteful capital out of the unfortunate incident, to the great damage of the young couple.

From this time on there was unpopularity and misfortune for Hercules. And promotion for even less experienced but more highly favored juniors—

juniors who belonged to that charmed circle, "*Family influence.*"

None of the few who felt like it, dared denounce the injustice of this wholesale condemnation, and finally reflecting that it was not their quarrel, and forgetting the sweetness of sympathy at the time of their own early blunders and inexperience, they left him to his fate.

Meanwhile the young man kept on in his usual way, entirely unsuspicious of this adverse sentiment, and of the storm gathering over his devoted head, of which this incident was the first premonition.

Kept on to his doom.

Major Blondin was not idle.

He had not forgotten him for the humiliation he had been subjected to at his hands in the drunken encounter at the clubroom with Moultrie, and if ever one man more than another was persistent and possessed, to perfection, the tact of the monkey who made tongs of the cat's paws to take the chestnuts out of the fire, Major Blondin was that man.

By what devices he accomplished it passes the ordinary human visual, but that he did plot, successfully, and create dissensions, or widen existing breaches between Hercules and others, every one finally admitted.

But not until too late.

Especially was this realized after Hercules had been dishonorably dismissed from the army on trumped up charges, the result of a deep laid conspiracy which Colonel Swimm could have but did not crush.

There was an order in force at the time of the Indian raid described, which directed that all troops leaving the garrison should be carefully inspected by the adjutant before departure, and again immediately upon their return.

This duty, at this and for some time previous, had been delegated to Major Blondin, who, in the discharge of it, had inspected the two detachments that

were sent out on the memorable occasion just narrated.

This one commanded by Hercules and the other that went to the place of the massacre.

By some sort of satanic luck, he had not, up to the time Hercules returned, submitted a report of his inspection of his detachment before it left.

And the condition in which he found the men and animals when they came back, coupled with the fruitlessness of the expedition, suggested to his malicious mind such changes in that document as would permanently record the young man as far more culpable than the truth could possibly represent him. And Blondin was not slow to put in execution the infamous thought.

He painted his unfortunate victim as black, figuratively speaking, as the most unbridled license would allow, and fortified his unjust reports by affidavits from the soldiers and citizens of the party.

The former were only too glad to shift all responsibility from their own shoulders to those of their young commander, and the latter were easily made to believe, by the wily major, that Hercules had grossly mismanaged and thereby lost for them their valuable stock beyond hope of recovery.

Major Blondin was a man whose anger it was perilous to rouse, for, as before intimated he cherished resentment—never forgave.

Furthermore his enmity was very active and sleeplessly aggressive.

"When he is really down on a man, he never lets up until the discount is big in his favor,"

Lieutenant Blower euphoniously remarked, on one occasion.

And it was the "undertow" that he made especially dangerous. The skillful and silent manipulations of all circumstances and situations adverse to Hercules, and the creation of new as well as the advancement of existing hostile feeling toward him.

This was done in such underhanded ways, and

under such favorable conditions for the Major, that the end he sought was attained sooner than he had hoped, and attained, too, without any exposure of the cowardly part he had played himself, beyond what would appear perfectly natural from his well-known unfriendliness.

If fortune had only unmasked the infamous hand that secretly pulled the strings and concocted the several plots from time to time, for the discomfiture and humiliation of Hercules, Blondin might have been exposed.

But that did not occur.

No evidence of persistent and unceasing mustering of inimical forces was sufficiently betrayed to constitute definite matter for counter-charges, and Hercules finally went to the wall, unaware, personally, of the secret warfare that had been so maliciously and continuously waged against him.

In no man's case, more than in his, has it ever been proven that adversity does mature the mind and age the body.

The report of Major Blondin in reference to his pursuit of the Indians, charged him, falsely, with having received thoroughly sound horses throughout, on starting, and alleged, falsely again, the total unfitness for further service, until some months, of all, when he returned.

In after years, when Hercules learned the sad truth fully, and reflected on how this malicious man had built for him at department headquarters, and even the war office at Washington, a cruelly false reputation, he grew to understand what he had before under-estimated, the *great value of contesting untrue reports immediately on their utterance.*

But when this first proof of Blondin's purpose to avenge himself, under official cover and through official agencies, for personal grievances, he merely snapped his fingers at him.

Figuratively speaking again, Hercules did not cu-

his wisdom teeth until the period of their usefulness seemed to have passed.

And when they were cut, he lamented what, in his self-reproaches he styled his stupid and fatal inexperience that had permitted malevolent falsehoods to go unchallenged and become things of permanent record and supposed truths against him at headquarters, and among high authority where he was personally a stranger.

Led on to it by Blondin, the cowardly citizens who had snored all night in the bivouac last described, had carelessly signed affidavits to the effect that Hercules had done likewise, and had also, the following morning, slept again with the utmost indifference until ten o'clock, which was the time at which his patrols had returned and reported that they could find no trail crossing the stream on which the command was camped.

Long before the official copy of Blondin's report had reached him from the Adjutant's office, the citizens had scattered to their several ranches, and Blondin had merely recommended that Hercules be censured.

He knew full well no court martial would dismiss the young officer, and he also knew, or feared, that he himself would be exposed and Hercules vindicated on a sharp cross-examination. Hence he dare not suggest the extremes he so ardently desired.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BERTHA AT THE THEATRE EXCITES UNDISGUISED ADMIRATION.

MRS. POINSETT and Bertha alighted at noon, from a coach, at the ladies' entrance to that Grand Western hotel, "The Lindell," in the city of St. Louis.

Professor Cheval had come from Cedar-Crest with them as their escort, and his pretty wife, for the first time, saw the great metropolis of the south-west.

The Poinsetts had prolonged their stay from Wednesday to Friday in order to enjoy their delightful companionship, the professor being unable to conveniently defer his duties at the college during the intervening days.

On arrival at the depot Mrs. Cheval and he drove to the home of a dear old friend on Choteau Avenue, where they were received with open arms, the telegram of the professor, announcing his coming, having arrived in due time.

Moultrie had been posted in reference to this programme.

That is, he had received a letter at the railroad terminus, and the very first thing Mrs. Poinsett did after entering the parlor was to send for a telegraph blank and the clerk, and dictate a dispatch to the same point, stating that she would remain in St. Louis until Tuesday night following.

By nine o'clock the next morning she was on her way, with Prof. Cheval, to make some final purchases, and finish up a few uncompleted transactions in reference to her property, left in the hands of the agent Moultrie had recommended.

Here, she learned, her traveling carriage, or rather

Bertha's, for she had declined to accept it, had been shipped some ten days' previous to the end of the R. R. line.

Bertha and Mrs. Cheval, on sight-seeing bent, drove meanwhile to the principal points of interest in the city.

Tuesday came only too soon.

Monday had been a day of recreation, ending with the theatre at night, and a supper following, which somewhat upset these villagers of early hours, so that they were not through the next morning's breakfast and ready for outside attractions until nearly noon.

Their R. R. tickets had been purchased, their baggage checked, and they were safely seated in their sleeper state room, waiting for the train to start, that evening, when they heard a voice ask :

"Is Mrs. Poinsett in this car ?"

Bertha sprang to her feet and beheld a young man in the doorway, whom she had observed at the hotel, and who was the speaker.

He approached her, and lifting his hat, asked if she was Mrs. Poinsett. The young rascal knew she was not.

Bertha pointed to her mother, with a smile, and the young man, with keen business instinct, asked her in turn if she expected any telegram from the west, and if so from whom and from where.

Mrs. Poinsett said she did not, unless some accident had happened Mr. De Kalb at Hays City, Kansas, whereupon, with a satisfied smile, the youth delivered a dispatch that had been opened

Bertha was expressing her surprise at this seeming liberty, when her mother interposed, saying she had requested the hotel people to do so with any telegrams arriving, and if important to repeat them on the line of the railroad at such point as they thought would reach her.

The young man said that the one just turned over to her had been delivered a few moments after her

carriage had left the hotel, and he then felicitated himself on his good fortune in reaching them before the train had left.

The words were scarcely uttered when the cars began to move, and wealthier by one dollar bestowed by Mrs. Poinsett, the young fellow hurried for the platform.

Bertha and her mother now had time to read the message, and judge of their surprise when they found it was from Moultrie and requested them to remain at the Lindell until his arrival, and announced that he would leave the end of the track to join them at nine o'clock that very evening. Of course, they were delighted.

It did not take long to call the conductor and arrange to have their baggage put off at the first station.

As good luck would have it they had to wait only a few minutes for an incoming train, and re-occupied that night the same room they had vacated at an earlier hour.

Bertha, glancing from the evening paper to her watch, urged her mother to take her to the theatre, saying it was not late and a noted actress was to play in Romeo and Juliet.

She would not take no for an answer, and actually half dragged the indulgent mother off to witness the drama in question.

She had no idea, poor, innocent child, that there was any difference between ladies going without an escort to an entertainment in that populous city, and the little village of Cedar-Crest, or if she had she was too independent to care. Maybe the thought didn't occur to her at all.

The "great actress" fully sustained her splendid reputation, and her support throughout was most excellent, as were also all the stage appointments.

Bertha was charmed. The audience was a cultured one.

The lines were very familiar to her, but never be-

fore had she witnessed the play presented with appropriate stage settings, and by a superb company, that did full justice to all their respective parts. She had read it only.

What are by many regarded as insipid portions of the text, had never impressed her when reading them as platitudes, and she could not believe, after this grand presentation, that they ever would so impress her.

So much, in fact, was she fascinated with the charming and suggestive balcony scene, that, leaning forward, in rapt attention, she was totally unconscious that her own lovely face was a most entrancing study for those in the audience who saw and could not help riveting their gaze on it.

Especially did the many gentlemen, with their double-barreled lorgnettes, leveled directly at her speaking features, appreciate this fact.

Suddenly, Mrs. Poinsett, discovering the situation, and overwhelmed with blushes, called Bertha's attention to herself, and besought her to leave the place at once. Poor little woman, she recoiled from being made so conspicuous.

"Everyone knows we are the veriest of greenhorns,"

She said, pleadingly, by way of argument.

But her daughter, looking fearlessly at the audience, could see no "men staring through a multitude of opera glasses with all their eyes," as her mother had stated.

Furthermore, she was enchanted beyond expression with the play. So she decided, quite emphatically for her, to stay and see it out, saying,

"It would be worse than ever if we attract additional attention by leaving in the middle of the performance, and also give good cause for such an opinion."

The opera.glasses had been politely lowered when Mrs. Poinsett had manifested so much uneasiness.

That is why Bertha did not see them.

But the glasses were soon leveled at her again, when she and her mother were once more absorbed in the play and not watching.

Bertha certainly did look bewitching in her neatly fitting, gray traveling costume.

The jaunty turban set off her immaculate head to perfection, and the little standing collar, with its narrow line of spotless white encircling the swan-like neck, the corners in front turned down, on either side of the dimpled chin, and fastened at the throat with a modest little bow of satin ribbon, in color like the dress, was exceedingly becoming to her style of beauty.

Each poise and turn of the head, and each sway of the body, was grace personified, and she could not have prevented it, had she tried, for it was inborn in her.

The symmetrically sloping shoulders, and small slender hands and tapering fingers, bespoke the patrician of classical archetype.

Those who had so rudely gazed at her, in such rapt admiration, could not honestly set her down, in their convictions, as a rustic, or even a rough diamond, although the men who gathered in the lobby to stare again, as she made her exit, after the curtain fell, for lack of better judgment or lack of knowledge of more fitting words, so described her.

"From the country, that's plain to be seen," remarked one.

"Crude, but by Jove! beautiful!" said another, and:

"Oh, Arthur, why do you stare so at that girl?" added a nicely-dressed little lady, leaning on the arm of her red-faced husband.

Some one has written, I think it was Amy Leslie in the Chicago *Evening News*, that "There is a pretty convent devotion that shields innocence and seems to link virginal womanhood to highest Heaven. Nuns put a sweet little prayer upon the lips of girl-

hood, that begs the shelter of a watchful angel's wings."

"I think it very beautiful to hope that virginity is so tenderly protected."

Mrs. Poinsett felt very nervous indeed to have themselves thus, the cynosure of all eyes, and was glad beyond measure of the relief, when an importunate hackman presented himself, and she was able to escape into his carriage, and be driven to the hotel.

As Bertha, however, leaned forward, so completely bewitched with the play, and unconscious of everything else, and watched and listened enthralled, especially through that famous balcony scene, her rich red lips parted, her speaking eyes scintillating, and a faint, roseate hue mantling her rounded cheeks, the harmonious lineaments of her lovely face seemed to reflect, as a faithful mirror, the blissful sentiment palpitating her guileless young heart.

Once, in the midst of one of the prettiest scenes, Mrs. Poinsett glanced at Bertha as if for approval of her approval. She was amazed! She thought she had never seen anything so lovely as her baby girl was at that moment, and drawing the curtain, so as to screen them from the audience, she threw her arms around her and kissed her.

The great impersonator of Juliet saw the act, and walking down the stage, threw a passion flower into their box. The drawn curtain had not shut out her view of its interior.

The audience saw the act of the great actress, and applauded to the echo. And this little incident doubtless accounted, in a measure, for the attention they attracted when leaving the theatre.

Bertha met the stares directed at her fearlessly.

Though a gentle, cultured and affectionate girl, she was self-reliant, and capable of defying Mrs. Grundy.

Her mother was surprised at her perfect composure and dignity.

That night the expectant bride dreamed many fantastic dreams. And her mind wandered and reveled with beautiful-eyed houri in one long, pleasant spell, through all the sweet hours that her lovely head rested in the downy depths of her luxurious pillow.

She was in enchantment land, a fairy princess, and Moultrie was a prince, clad in indescribable magnificence, wooing her to the strains of sweetest music, and by the light of lovely fountains that sent forth innumerable, rich-hued streams of perfumed and illuminated waters and sparkling spray.

Oh, the glamour of love and youth!

The next morning she commenced a letter to Mrs. Cheval, directly after breakfast, and wrote seventeen pages before she was ready for the first postscript.

And then afterwards she wrote such a long one, that it took two stamps to pay the postage on it alone.

Mrs. Cheval and she were confidential and devoted friends, and Mrs. Cheval was, as she herself expressed it,

"Just crazy to see that wonderful man, who could be so completely a very demi-god in the esteem of my little friend."

All Cedar-Crest knew of the approaching marriage, and all Cedar-Crestians were on the *qui vive*, anxious to do the honors to the happy couple.

Not one of them but believed, now that Moultrie was coming to Saint Louis for his bride, that he would make at least a flying visit to his birth-place.

And every one of them was anxious for an explanation, from his own lips, of his marvelous success.

"We just do want to know the *modus operandi*, as it were," said the postmaster.

"And I reckon we do," responded the ticket agent at the depot. "But what is Modus opendi?"

Moultrie shied clear of his birth-place, however,

"No man is without honor except in his own country."

To all of Cheval's arguments he turned a deaf ear saying, "I owe Cedar-Crest nothing and shall not incur any debt, nor put the place under obligations to myself, by going there. Unless you wish it," he added, looking at Bertha.

"I wish just what you wish and think best," she replied, promptly.

"All right! Since I don't wish to pose as a dime museum freak, nor a nine days' wonder, nor a curiosity of any kind or calibre, I shall decline going to Cedar-Crest to make either a holy or any other kind of a show of myself.

"Especially so as side partner and first or second fiddle to you." And Bertha looked her approval of "them sentiments."

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW CHEVAL WON HIS WIFE.

MRS. CHEVAL was different from everyone else. She was an old convent chum of Lydia Waring and that is why she drifted to Cedar-Crest.

The circumstances were these.

Mrs. Cheval had lost her parents several years previous and had, since then, been keeping house for her brother, who was a navy officer, stationed at a large navy yard, on the Atlantic seaboard.

Suddenly orders came that broke up her brother's domestic establishment at the yard and shipped him off to China, as executive officer of one of the war ships of the fleet in those far away seas.

For a long time one of her dearest and most con-

stant correspondents had been Lydia, and of course, what was transpiring and what was in prospect had been regularly written by both.

Mrs. Cheval was offered a home with her aunt, and with her grandma, and with a dozen kind friends in a dozen different places, for she was greatly beloved by all who knew her.

But the most welcome letter she received was that from Lydia inviting her to spend the summer with her in her western home.

"We'll make flying trips to Chicago and St. Louis and take rides on the Mississippi River," Lydia had written, "and have just a grand old time."

Mrs. Cheval had never been west. She had never seen a prairie, and she would like to have a ride on that great "Father of Waters" De Sota had discovered and explored.

She therefore wrote, cheerfully, in return, "I will consent to be a responsibility and a probable nuisance on your hands this summer."

The parting between her devoted "big brother" and herself had taken place and was quite affecting.

She had paid a brief visit to auntie and grandma, and had finally landed at the Cedar-Crest depot, where Lydia had folded her in her arms, with the usual greeting peculiar to the reunion of long separated old school-girl chums.

It was a pretty picture, that meeting. Just imagine it.

Two truly lovely, affectionate and cultured girls, full of life and love for everything beautiful and good, and utterly oblivious of, or indifferent to the crowd staring at them, embracing and kissing each other, then talking a bit and kissing again, and each asking the other a hundred questions, never waiting an instant for one to be answered, both chatting away with the utmost volubility, neither remembering a moment after what she had said a moment before—was it not a pretty picture?"

For full three minutes neither stopped talking a

second, except for a hurried breath, and then both said together:

"Oh, my! I am so tired!"

And laughed and linked their little fingers as a sign of good luck, because they had both said the same thing at the same time.

"Won't you introduce me to your 'little rascal,'" spoke a manly voice at this juncture.

And both turned in amazement and looked up at an elderly gentleman,

"Upon whose face the imprint of God's image was stamped!" grand old Dr. Waring!

"Hello, papa! Here is Lillian! Darling, this is my father."

And now the ice being broken, a full-fledged Cedar-Crest mob surrounded and besieged the girls, for it was a holiday and "school was out," and a picnic on the tapis.

A Cedar-Crest mob, except in the extreme lower end of town, was always a highly respectable gathering.

Twenty persons at the depot had heard Lydia call her friend "You sweet little rascal."

Dr. Waring was not alone, therefore, in that respect. He too had heard. And from thenceforth those who did not know her by her real name, admired Mrs. Cheval at a distance, as a "sweet little rascal."

Every one will remember that Lydia liked "things *practical*."

If she meant by that that she liked what was unaffected and natural in human nature, she had hit the nail on the head in liking her friend, Lillian Estelle.

Miss Estelle knew no more how to feign, presume or assume, how to deceive or be indiscreet, how to flatter or be fulsome, than the veriest nobody in intelligence in that drift, on earth.

She had descended from distinguished lineage. Had relatives all over the land who were among the

most highly respectable in the neighborhood in which they lived.

But she was an independent little piece of crinoline-clad humanity, and "as long as De Courcey—her big brother—lived," she did not desire, she said, to accept even the slighest service or courtesy at other hands, because, to quote her own words,

"I have no establishment of my own nor any other means of reciprocation."

I have said that Mrs. Cheval was unlike any one else. But this characteristic, or whatever you choose to call it, does not count in that connection.

Some people admire long hair of thick growth and hair pronounced in color or fineness.

Lillie's hair was neither long nor thick nor pronounced in color or fineness.

What there was about and in her queenly head was not expended in that direction.

Now and then one meets with children, more frequently boys of patrician parentage, who have silken brown tresses, that shine and glisten, and turn to gold, in sunlight.

They decorate the head like a diadem and invest it with the semblance of royalty.

Lillian Estelle's hair was like that.

She was scant five feet three in height and just sufficiently plump to be called neither slim nor stout.

A natural fluffiness, or inclination to curl made artificial bangs positive distortions, or would have made them so had they ever been resorted to, and converted her neither thick nor thin head of hair, into a glorious crown piece for an exquisitely chiseled face, neck, and shoulders.

More than one artist and sculptor, not to speak of scores of dudes, and numerous better men than dudes, had raved over these, presented in semi profile.

The nose was sufficiently Grecian not to be too severe in outline. The forehead was low, the eye-

brows golden and the mouth not too pliant; the eyelashes long and light colored.

That mouth, and the little, rounded, aristocratic chin, told their own story to the physiognomist.

They would yield to discipline.

And the clear, beautiful blue eyes, peering through their fringe of silken yellow lashes, suggested a latent force of character, not to be roused except on great occasion.

The plump, small, jeweled hands, with their long tapering fingers and rosy finger nails, and the tiny, slender feet confirmed the impression instantly made by the face.

No wonder Lydia wanted her old schoolmate to come out West and spent the summer with her.

And such a delightful summer as it was!

It passed all too quickly.

Somehow, Professor Cheval did not take his usual outing that year. And somehow he was always around and made himself a necessity whenever Lydia was arranging a divertisment.

And somehow, if by any mischance, he was not, Lillian suggested, now, in the most off-hand manner possible, and then oracularly, that he should be sent for and consulted before they finally decided. And he always was sent for.

Lillian had a very large correspondence. She was a facile, rapid writer, and wrote numerous short letters, in response to numerous long ones.

But if her piles of scented epistles had been as high as a haystack, she would have dropped them all at the sound of Cheval's voice.

As the time for Miss Estelle's departure grew near, Lydia smelled a mystery which worried her but was destined to be short lived.

She was sick at heart over a sudden reticence that took possession of her friend.

But in a few days a big square envelope, with the seal and superscription of the Cedar-Crest Ladies'

Seminary, was found at Lillian's plate, close to a dish of fruit on the breakfast table.

"The cat was out of the bag!"

Lillian blushed and passed it to Lydia.

It was the appointment of the latter as teacher of French and music.

Eight months afterward, just as the grass began to sprout and the trees to leaf, she changed the name of Estelle for that of Cheval.

CHAPTER XXX.

OH! LOVING IS A RAPTUROUS THRILL.

THURSDAY noon, while Mrs. Poinsett was out shopping, there was a rap at their room door, and with her heart in her mouth Bertha read,

"Moultrie De Kalb,"

On a plain, heavy card she took from the tray, extended toward her by the colored waiter.

"The gentleman is in the parlah," he said.

"Please show him the way up,"

Was her nervous answer, enunciated as if each succeeding word was trying to force itself ahead of its immediate predecessor.

Then she reflected, after the boy had left, that perhaps it was not exactly proper to receive him while alone in her own room, and while she was considering the idea, "little goose," of going down to the parlor to receive him, she again heard a knock at the door.

It was the same old rap so familiar to her, though somewhat more vigorous, this time. Three minor taps and a loud bang.

How Bertha did tremble!

Her heart ceased to beat, for an instant, and ruth-

lessly jumped into her throat and choked off her timid, tremulous

"Come in!"

"It wasn't loud enough, and Moultrie was obliged to knock again. Which he did with increased vigor.

He had slowly followed on the trail of the colored boy, and that individual had had to retrace his steps toward the parlor but part of the way, where he met the impatient young man, delivered Bertha's message to him on the stairway, and pointed out her room.

At the second knock she immediately started toward the door, flushed crimson and tottering as she went.

It opened, however, before she reached it, and a manly figure, with a handsome face, somewhat bronzed, suddenly darted forward and folded her in his arms.

"Bertha!"

"Moultrie!"

Were all the words uttered.

"But love spake love to eyes that spake again."

He lifted her sweet, happy face, hid against his breast, and upturned it to his own, and as it lay, confidingly, on his good right arm, he bent his lips to hers and kissed her, rapturously.

Pleasure is never unalloyed.

While he and Bertha were thus engaged totally oblivious of all things else, save themselves and their happiness, the door suddenly opened and in popped Mrs. Poinsett.

Presto! Veto! Change!

We will draw a curtain over the blissful tableau.

Suffice it to say, without *too abrupt a "draw,"* dear reader, Moultrie, with rare presence of mind, turned to the still pretty widow, after the first blush of surprise and confusion was over, calling her "Dear Mother," and kissed her, submissively, much to the relief of Bertha who, although she had

enjoyed hugely what had preceded, welcomed this change of attack as the best assuager of her mortification at being so suddenly caught.

And then, bless us! What a mutual admiration society there was among the three, for a little while.

The sojourn at the hotel during the next few days, was a season of inexpressible delight to the happy twain.

Bertha desired a strictly private wedding, and except the clergyman who officiated, the hotel boniface, Prof. Cheval and wife, and a few St. Louis friends, there were no guests at the joyous nuptial breakfast in the cosy private parlor opposite Mrs. Poinsett's own room.

On reaching the railroad terminus, where Moultrie had intended to meet Bertha and her mother, he had learned that there had just occurred a general uprising of the Indian tribes, throughout the section of country he would have to pass over with his bride, on his return to Centipede Canyon, and the opportune, businesslike telegram from Mrs Poinsett, showed him he would be able to intercept her in St. Louis, by telegraphing at once.

He told them he had prepared everything for the marriage at the end of the railroad, just before he had heard this news.

He had found there a tall and very thin clergyman, very thin indeed, who had been chaplain of a volunteer regiment, in the war of the rebellion, and was en route to a reservation as Indian agent. And he was to have tied the knot.

And he recounted, with a hearty laugh, how he had grossly offended that chaplain by addressing him as "Dr. Bernhardt."

A wag of an engineer, connected with the railroad survey, had told him that that was his name.

He lived in the same village the D. D. came from, and, it appears, the villagers had dubbed him that because he was so very thin.

Being a Methodist he was bitterly opposed to

theatricals and theatrical celebrities and resented the appellation as a gross indignity.

"He was a very nice old gentleman," Moultrie continued, "and I explained the matter without betraying anyone, and we parted good friends.

"But it was a good joke on me and I was glad to get away. Every one nagged me so."

Immediately after the wedding breakfast Moultrie, Bertha and Mrs. Poinsett entered a carriage and were driven to the depot where they took the cars for Chicago.

Here they remained three days, spending their time riding about the city and attending the theatre, opera and other places of amusement, when not engaged in "billing and cooing."

From Chicago they went to Detroit, and then to Cleveland and Buffalo.

At the latter place, as has been the case with other territorial people, the frequent mention of its name, in a half dazed sensation, constantly reminded Moultrie of the animal so prevalent in his western home. The fast vanishing Buffalo of the Plains.

Several days they spent at each of these points, and Moultrie met many old acquaintances at Fort Wayne and Fort Porter who cheerfully assisted him in "seeing the elephant."

Then, by way of Niagara Falls and Toronto, Canada, they went leisurely to Montreal (stopping at the palatial Windsor), and after much sightseeing there, switched off to Burlington, Vermont, from which point they proceeded by easy stages, to New York City, going by way of Lake George, Saratoga, West Point and Albany.

At all these places they loitered long enough to thoroughly do them justice.

Bertha was as supremely happy all the time as she could have been had her dream of enchanted land at the famous St. Louis hotel come true.

She had read much about the many beautiful

scenes through which this delightful trip took them, and now she saw all the reality with her own eyes.

They remained in New York City about three weeks, and while there Moultrie made remarkably good use of his time, both in sightseeing and business directions.

Every morning, with Bertha, who accompanied him everywhere, he would sally out of the Brunswick, at which splendid hostlerie he had rooms, and go down among the jobbers and the large auction firms, real estate and mining offices, and purchase goods at great bargains, for shipment west, or buy and sell stocks and securities.

In these little expeditions Mrs. De Kalb went into localities where, at that time, ladies were scarcely ever seen. And her beauty, grace and princely-appearing husband created a decided sensation.

Moultrie, too, was recognized as a shrewd capitalist, and very soon "spotted" as a mining millionaire and cattle king, to lie in wait for and fleece.

As they were walking up crowded Broadway, one afternoon, after a visit to the Stock Exchange, they came in collision with a tall, portly gentleman, who, after several fruitless efforts, had finally put a dangerous banana peel off the sidewalk into the gutter.

A polite apology from Moultrie was followed by a pleasant chat, as the old gentleman was going their way, and, to his infinite surprise, Moultrie discovered that he was conversing with the father of Hercules.

Of course Bertha would not accept "No" for an answer, and as a consequence, he had to accept their pressing invitation. So the three dined together, *sans ceremonie*.

Bertha told what she knew of Hercules when he was a "good boy" at college, and Moultrie spoke of their meeting on the remote Indian border, and mutual interest and delight prevailed.

In the evening the trio went to see Lillian Russell at the Casino.

How little the sharks, who had the project in view to fleece Moultrie, knew of him.

Though a stranger in New York and ignorant of Wall Street methods, in his hours of leisure during his career in the far West, he had not been idle, but had read extensively of this very class of speculators and commercial cormorants, and his eye teeth, to a considerable extent, had been already, theoretically, cut.

His principal literature, in fact, had been treatises, and random articles on the ins and outs of money making. And the market and stock reports and quotations as given in the New York and other newspapers had been like daily food to him.

"Some time," he had said to himself, "I will live in New York."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CHIEF WEDDING GIFT AND THE BRIDAL TOUR.

ONE bright morning he invited Mrs. Poinsett to accompany Bertha and himself on a three days' carriage trip over certain portions of Long Island.

He spread a chart on the breakfast table, and indicated his route by pencil tracings.

She was delighted at the idea, and pinched Bertha's arm in approval.

Moultrie hurried them up and they were soon on their way.

Of all the lovely places and desirable locations seen on this very pleasant jaunt, for the weather was delightful all the time, an ancient farm-house, with a deep, broad verandah, situated in a pretty grove of venerable trees, on a gently sloping hill, and over-

looking the broad ocean, suited Bertha and her mother best.

In vain did Moultrie try to make them believe other places he pointed out were more beautiful, or, at least, on some accounts more desirable. And finally he admitted, with expressions of unmistakable satisfaction, that their selection had been his all along.

News about this time reached him that the road was now safe and the country on the way to Centipede Canon filled with troops and deserted by Indians. He therefore proposed a short trip to Boston, stopping at Newport en route, and announced at the breakfast table suddenly one morning that they would leave by boat for the latter place that night.

About noon he escorted the ladies to an attorney's office on Broadway, where the papers were duly read and signed, and the Long Island property, so much admired, to their infinite surprise was deeded by him to his wife as "a wedding present."

The intended two days at the "Athens of America" was, however, stretched out to five, before they could possibly tear themselves away.

At Newport they went over the famous ocean drive, sported in the festive waves, much unlike dolphins, and swallowed their full quantum of Atlantic's brine.

At Fall River they watched a cotton bale pass through the looms and the print works until it came out calico, which they bought and took west with them.

Finally, they boarded the express at Boston for St. Louis, en route to their Colorado home.

Every conceivable new housekeeping device that promised improvement over old methods had been previously selected by Mrs. Poinsett and shipped from New York. She would go out almost daily on exploring expeditions, up and down Broadway, and other streets, and report results to Moultrie the same evening or next morning.

As a consequence, many ingenious articles were purchased at wholesale, and added to the stock in trade for the several stores he was interested in.

Wherever it was possible he furnished two state-rooms for his party, having the forethought to telegraph ahead, thus securing the very best on the roads over which they traveled.

There was but one delay over the entire long and somewhat tedious route, and this occurred at an uninteresting crossroad, the Saturday night following their departure from Boston.

They were detained thirty hours, but their "lines fell in pleasant places," for the hotel at the station furnished meals for three different intersecting railroad lines, had been but recently built, was nicely furnished, and best of all, in charge of an excellent caterer.

And Moultrie was very fortunate in finding the best suite of rooms in the place vacant.

His private parlor opened out on a verandah, vine-trellised and broad, that overlooked the track they would start out on the following Monday morning.

The grand round of sight-seeing they had indulged in demanded this opportune but enforced rest for Bertha and her mother and they were both much refreshed when they again resumed their journey.

It also proved very welcome and refreshing even to the busy and restless Moultrie, impatient to get back to his business.

They went on from this point continuously to the end of the track, making close connections everywhere they changed cars, and found Señor Ysleta and the others waiting for them, and a large overland wagon train, with an escort of soldiers loading up preparatory to departure.

Moultrie had corresponded with the Señor during their separation, by means of which he had been kept posted in respect to everything transpiring that referred to his own business interests.

The various shipments made from New York and

elsewhere, had been duly received and the boxes, labeled with numbers corresponding with the numbers on the invoices of their contents, had been judiciously loaded on the huge "prairie schooners" that were to carry them to their final distant destination.

While on the cars Bertha indulged in a long retrospect of her experiences since her wedding day. And it amazed, amused and bewildered her.

She had seen so much in so short a time and had traveled so far.

Oh! What a multitude of recollections came trooping through her mind.

All the different kinds of people she had encountered passed in rapid review before her.

She had met and had noted the peculiarities of persons who had lived in hotels all their lives, and persons who had never slept nor even taken a meal in a hotel.

Persons who had never known the pleasure of a ramble across green fields and through forests and had never been outside the limits of the noisy and crowded dingy city in which they had been born.

She had met, too, people who had never been in a larger town than the county seat of their native county.

People who having been taught none at home, took their manners from what they observed in restaurants, and knew no higher standard of good breeding.

Other people of a self-assumed, higher "respectability," who drank their champagne at the close of banquets and symposiums, and thought it the only appropriate time for doing so.

Wealthy people and common people; cultured people, instructed but not educated, and poor but educated and high-bred people; people of all descriptions of personality and professions and trades, as well as moneyed idlers, "people of leisure," and brazen adventurers—all these she had met, for

Moultrie, on extensive sight-seeing bent, had taken her with him everywhere. And she had closely studied them all, for she was a very observant little girl, Bertha was.

And oh! what a kaleidoscope of humanity they presented! How much her blissful wedding tour had given her to think about. And how very much she had seen of many things in every-day life in this busy world that she had never dreamed of.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE INDIAN CAPTIVES WERE RANSOMED.

THE unfortunate lady, nurse and children who were carried into captivity, were not killed by the Indians, into whose usually merciless hands they had fallen, but were hurried to a remote Indian village and held for ransom. The children, happily, soon won the hearts of their fierce captors, and were much petted by them, after their barbarous fashion.

And after the terror inspired by these hideously painted savages had worn off, the children grew fascinated with their wild mode of life, and with daring and dexterity joined with the Indian children in their various sports, ofttimes winning victories over them in juvenile athletic contests, and growing daily fonder of their swarthy, tawny companions.

And all this was most fortunate because it served to make effective their frequent needed intercession in behalf of their mother and devoted nurse, and induced a relaxation of the harsh and cruel treatment to which they were both at first subjected. The lot of those two unfortunate women was at best very hard indeed.

Indian squaws are "the hewers of wood and drawers of water" for their race.

They have charge of the animals that go with hunting parties, and on which is loaded the meat destined for winter consumption. And they look out for the welfare of those ridden by the "Braves," when not in use. When the game is killed by the warriors the squaws skin it, cut it up, dry it and pack it on the pack ponies.

They also erect such "schacks" or shelters as are used during bivouacs, gather all needed fuel, build fires, and do all the camp drudgery for their "noble lords and masters." They erect the teepees of the permanent villages, care for the hordes of dogs, and assist the boys in herding the horses.

Female captives are placed in charge of these squaws, and are either as much more cruelly mistreated or kindly protected as women everywhere are capable of harsher or gentler treatment of their sex than men are.

And thus it happened with our unfortunate captives from the overland wagon train.

The refined and delicate mother of the two golden-haired boys fared far worse than the colored nurse of the bonnie, wee baby sister, now in Mrs. Forster's kindly care at Centipede Canyon. The poor, heart-sick, half-demented mother all the time was believing and mourning her babe as dead.

She had read of instances where the inhuman red men had killed little children in a most cruel manner, and the terrible idea possessed her that such had been the fate of her little one.

Her mental suffering made her look as miserable, physically, as she felt in mind and heart, and this fact doubtless saved her from the very worst and most horrible fate to which these human fiends always subject female captives.

She looked more like an uncanny, sickly ghost, than a living, human being.

She had reason to thank God that she was the picture of death.

For some time she suffered acutely from the rough treatment received at and immediately after the time of her capture.

The pain from severe abrasions of the skin, and the numerous bruises she had sustained, kept sleep from her eyelids, and the subsequent cruel beatings she had received, from the old hag who was her custodian, after she arrived in the Indian village, made her life almost unendurable.

Only the good care the children were receiving sustained her.

She could do nothing, in her ignorance and illness, to suit the red woman placed over her, and frequent blows, some of which knocked her senseless, were the consequence.

One day the old hag met with an accident that confined her to her "teepee," and this, the good colored girl whose heart bled for her mistress' suffering, said to herself, was her opportunity.

Jointly they nursed the wounded parts of the sick Indian woman, and did all they could to relieve the pain, and provide what they had learned were toothsome morsels for her, the colored girl doing the most menial part of the work, until recovery was effected.

After this the old custodian was less cruel, and the captivity of the poor prisoners less hard to bear.

Eight months had passed, the long and dreary winter village with its horrid noises, its vermin and noisome odors had been abandoned, and a summer camp, in a cotton-wood grove, on the banks of a broad, shallow river, had been, for some little time, established, when an Indian "brave" told the nurse, whom recently, according to Indian rites, he had forcibly made his wife, that they were all going to be ransomed and would soon be free again and among their own people.

Oh! How their hearts did beat with gladness, at this news!

In less than a month thereafter, the entire party were safe among their friends.

The children and nurse, during their captivity, had learned to speak the tribal dialect quite fluently.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BERTHA LEARNS HOW HER FATHER WAS MURDERED.

THE "Mushroom" towns at the western, always changing terminus of those trans-continental railroads, built by alert capitalists and speculators to more expeditiously connect the wide-awake enterprise of the East with the great, fertile, but as yet untilled areas, and gold-boweled mountains, canons and streams of the Pacific slope, were, aside from their prospective, great commercial value, destined to be also useful as a potent factor to bring into greater, inter-dependent and closer social relations the people of the Orient, the Occident, and the interlying territory of our vast country.

They were, in fact, the pioneer agent in that cause, on whose swift wings the law and order and love of liberty and justice of the old Continental States, and the wholesome lessons inculcated therefrom, were borne to the new denizens of that erstwhile home of semi-civilized "greasers" and savage beasts, and still more savage red men.

Of what value would be the nuggets, rich dust and ingots of precious metal without a market? And of what use the boundless agricultural domain, whose rich resources were supinely waiting to be conquered by the westward march of civilization, if the noble

army of soil tillers of the East had not wended their way thitherward?

To the quiet, untraveled, and not curious person who has seen nothing under canvas more novel than a circus or menagerie and accompanying side-shows, but has, perchance, read of gypsy camps and bivouacs, these temporary railroad terminus towns would appear a sort of conglomeration of the two with numerous other heretofore unheard of features thrown in. They were made up principally of one-story, frail, frame buildings composed of light, portable sections, easily jointed together, and, at the period herein written of, were largely furnished by Chicago manufacturers of ready-made houses.

If the owner, however nomadic, had any luck whatever during the spring, summer and fall months, he would more than pay for his house several times over, for they were staunch enough, with care, to do service repeatedly at different points along the railroad, unless disastrously fluked from their prairie moorings by a wild west tornado, or burned to the ground by accident or incendiarism, before wearing out.

The railroad terminus was extended frequently from time to time, upon the completion of an additional twenty miles of accepted track, and this new point was always the new site for the terminal town, the latest focus of attraction on the line, the centre of business bustle, the "jumping off place," the connecting link between railroad and wagon, and horseback travel.

Here the immense caravans and overland wagon trains, from the remote west, would bivouac and load, or unload their freight. And here many herds of cattle, sheep and horses were received and shipped to eastern marts.

Here also emigrants and settlers, en route for the as yet undeveloped territories, would disembark their teams and other effects from the cars, hitch up and strike out for their unknown, new homes in the

wilderness. Here, or near by was usually a camp of regular soldiers, especially if the town was located on the lands of hostile Indians, or in the country liable to be raided by them. And here also was located the commissariat for the small army of graders and track layers and other railroad employees, engaged in the construction and operation of the railroad at that point.

Frontiermen in shirt sleeves, top boots and sombreros, with the inevitable pistols and knife at their waist belts, mingled with swarthy Mexican freighters, cowboys, contractors, fakirs, frontier merchants and all kinds of blacklegs and adventurers of both sexes and all ages.

Amid the busy hum and hurry of legitimate business, gambling, drinking and pistol firing, indulged in openly, seemed to be the leading occupations, especially after dark.

To kill a man, in one of such settlements, was not considered, under any circumstances, nearly as heinous as to steal his horse.

The town that was the railroad terminus to which Moultrie had taken Bertha and her mother, was just such a place as herein described.

It was built along one side of the railroad track and a company of soldiers was encamped on the other side. It was composed almost entirely of tents set on wooden frames, some new and neat looking, but most of them patched and very uncleanly. The railroad terminus had been but recently advanced to this point. In fact several platform cars had been attached to their train at the last terminus, loaded with ready-made houses that had been taken down and were being moved to this new terminus, On reaching the depot, a rough, plank platform with a small frame building at one end, Moultrie was met by Señor Ysleta and a keen-eyed, wiry little man who was introduced as one of the vigilance committee.

He advised Moultrie to take his ladies to the hotel

at once and as soon afterward as he could to give him an audience at the place to which Ysleta would conduct him.

The hotel was a plain, uninviting-looking house, of the ready-made kind, and sat flat on the ground. Its exterior was really forbidding, but the ladies found the interior very cosy.

Bertha's eyes opened to their widest as they rested for a moment on Ysleta and his mysterious companion, and then she turned her face toward her husband, with an inquisitive look.

He replied "Very well" to the stranger, gave her arm an assuring pressure, and followed the Mexican.

On the way to the hotel, some five hundred yards further up the street, they passed two gambling dens, huge, soiled tents, crowded with players and lookers on, several of whom rushed to the doors to stare at them.

In front of one of these dens was a sign, in black letters, announcing that the place was

"The Senate!"

And the other had, hanging over the entrance, a much soiled, triangular cotton cloth transparency on which was inscribed

"Paradise Hall."

These places were constructed partly of boards, but mostly of canvas, offensively filthy and mud bespattered.

At the "hotel" Moultrie could secure but one room, so he was obliged to accept quarters for himself, with Ysleta in the latter's tent. His own not having as yet arrived.

It would be two days, at the very earliest, before the wagon-train they were to accompany would start on its long, westward journey.

Just as the little party was entering the office of the hotel a man was seen rushing out of one of these dens to the middle of the street from where he turned suddenly and ran toward them.

Several sharp reports of pistol shots, fired from the door of the saloon he had just left, so precipitately, startled everyone, and a motley crowd quickly gathered.

The ladies were hurried into the building and conducted to a place of comparative safety just in the nick of time.

For they had scarcely crossed the doorsill when a ball from one of the pistols crashed into the doorcasing, with a ripping, rending sound, and buried itself, out of sight, in the soft wood.

The man the shot was intended for rushed madly into the hotel and fell to the office floor, from loss of blood.

"Whoop, boys! Here he is!"

Shouted a ferocious looking fellow following closely on his heels, a smoking revolver in his bronzed and dirty hand.

But, as he was about to discharge another charge into the prostrate body, Bertha sprang forward and, in commanding tones, cried,

"Stop!"

The man with the upraised pistol hesitated, and looked at her in unspeakable astonishment. Such courage, in one so frail and girlish, he had never seen before. He lowered his weapon and let the hammer down on the unexploded cap and then, looking at the hounded, wounded man said in a satisfied tone,

"All right Miss! I reckon he's played his last game anyhow! Yes, he's passed in his last chips, he'll never make another shuffle on this yer yearth. He'll make his next draw in hell!" and turning aside he faced and told his confederates, who were crowding after him, that their victim would "vamose soon to the happy hunting ground." And added they had better "mount and git quick" before the vigilance committee "woke up and got arter 'em."

"Slope dern sudden or you'll be swung!" he shouted. Then, rapid as a flash, the entire party rushed,

pell-mell, over to "Paradise Hall," at once mounted their ponies, tethered to the hitching posts in front, and rode off, at a hot gallop, across the trackless prairie, like mariners on a familiar sea where no compass was needed, yelling like triumphant Comanches. They were a bevy of really honest cowboys who had drank and gambled at this frontier railroad town with the man whose life Bertha had interceded to save. Through his sharp practice they had lost all their money. They were honest, devil-may-care fellows, of frontier ideas of ethics, law and religion, who worked hard, and ofttimes valorously for the life even of a Texas steer, in return for the small pay they received. And then they "blew it in" whenever opportunity offered. And such a splendid opportunity as a terminal railroad, mushroom town, where everybody wore "store clothes and there was *a real hotel*, was not often presented, and must not be "left out."

"Oh, no! Such a chance for a good time kems infrequent like in a life time with us," said "Puma Bill." And "Bull Neck Jones" responded, "Yar right, pard! yar right, I reckon! So we'll go to the railroad city. And they went with the result just narrated.

Some high words had followed when they discovered they had been cheated, and by a professional gambler too, and, suddenly, with looks that portended scant mercy, the exasperated losers drew their revolvers and proposed to instantly riddle him, as the quickest and surest way of revenging themselves.

But, while they were talking of reimbursing themselves also by pillaging his person, he "gave them the slip" and rushed for the hotel, as narrated, hoping, hopelessly and unavailingly, to fall in with rescuing pals.

Afterward, having finished the gambler's earthly career, these cowboys were too spry for the vengeance of the vigilance committee of the town, and

were safely beyond their reach, fully several minutes before those generally prompt, but, on this occasion, dilatory conservators of the peace had donned their trusty rifles and other arms and equipments and sallied forth to arrest them. The cowboy, *par excellence*, is one of nature's true noblemen, fearless, reckless, generous, he believes in his God, his sweetheart, wife, and mother. His *mother* is his ideal, *his saint*. But the average cowboy, under the spur of emergency, compares, favorably—or did in 1866 to '72—in celerity in getting out of danger's path, especially, supposed retributive justice, with the "noble red man." And it is a toss up which of the two is the better entitled to escape the clutches of arbitrary, hasty, frontier vengeance, dubbed law by ignoramuses of law. Even they—the average cowboys are, as a class, honest and daring but not quite "up to date" as moral, God-loving men. An army surgeon, temporarily in the town, dressed the wounds of the gambler whose life Bertha had saved, and pronounced them very serious. She, after the reaction of the sudden, great excitement, grew pale and fainted.

Tenderly, by rough frontiermen, she was carried to a little crib of a room and restored to consciousness by her devoted mamma. Moultrie had gone with Ysleta. Notwithstanding all this, Bertha, later on, joined her mother in nursing the stricken stranger. Seeking, in the kindness of her true heart, to relieve his suffering, as far as possible.

And in this unselfish, generous act the true nobleness of their respective characters was never submitted to a more severe test, and never more fully proven.

"I knew him," the wounded man added, with a nod in answer to her look of inquiry, "knew and served with him and under him in that and several other battles."

"He was at one time my best friend, and I hon-

ored and loved him. But I proved a wretch! Listen."

"At Franklin he had a large sum of greenbacks on his person, which he had captured from a Yankee paymaster—a few days previous.

"Very few, if any, in the command except myself knew of it.

"In a bantering way I demanded 'a divy'—a division of the sum, between us.

"He laughed me to scorn and said I never had had any property, but that his estate had been overrun and destroyed by both armies, and he would need it all to pay for damages.

"It was the first time there had ever been any unkind words between us, and I felt, more than language can tell, his stinging rebuke of what he styled 'my preposterous pretensions.'

"Until that hour I had been devotedly attached to him, but after it my heart rankled with resentment. I nursed a feeling of bitter hatred and secretly resolved to be revenged; to have that Yankee money.

"The opportunity came all too soon.

"The old love I had so faithfully borne him in the bygone had begun to revive and reassert itself, and I was finding self condemnation and excuses for what I had called his insufferable arrogance supplanting my ugliness of temper when we were precipitated into that terrible fight at Franklin.

"As you doubtless must know, the fortunes of all Southerners at that particular period, were decidedly desperate, and cupidity whetted my appetite when I saw my victim, at midnight, prostrate, with serious wounds, at my side in an isolated spot.

"He was now helplessly in my power with a score of dead and dying comrades lying around him, and not only could I covertly kill him, but I could also possess myself of the, to me, small fortune he had secreted about his person.

"Villainy seldom seeks justification at the moment

of temptation, or is, at best, satisfied with very little of it. A demon possessed me!

"I argued that I had fought the battles of the South as valiantly as he, and was equally with him entitled to this money, and that he, under cover of his superior rank, had given me a deadly insult for which his life's blood alone could and should atone. These arguments quickly determined me to become both a thief and a murderer, and I killed and robbed my old-time friend! Your father!

"That money never did me any good, for later on in Nashville, I lost most of it, in one night, at a game of cards, and sowed the seed that ultimately made me a professional gambler and an outcast, as you now see me.

"Steadily I have descended until the present moment, when I have, perhaps, reached the lowest round of the infamous ladder.

"Your father's wounds—as I have given you to understand—rendered my cowardly work easy and safe of accomplishment, for he could not defend himself, and everyone would think he had been fairly killed in battle. In fact it had been so reported."

Here the wounded man, who had talked thus far at intervals, during intense suffering, went into a spasm, and his eyes grew glassy.

Moultrie gave him some brandy, but it did not revive him, and the doctor could not be found.

Horror, grief and compassion surged in the breasts of the two terribly wronged women!

The next morning, just as the gates of dawn were opening, the self-confessed murderer's soul winged its flight to eternal judgment.

Folded in the pinions of hovering angels—letters of credit to the supreme Ruler on the Great White Throne—were the prayers of Bertha and her mother, pleading for his forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BERTHA MEETS THE MOTHER OF MRS. FORSTER'S ADOPTED CHILD.

THE next day, in the midst of the busy preparations for departure, a neat-looking, plainly-dressed lady came to Bertha in the hotel breakfast room, and asked her if she was related to a Mr. De Kalb, who had gone to Colorado several years before, in an overland train that was attacked by Indians.

Bertha was familiar with all the particulars of the occurrence, and so informed the lady.

"There was an unfortunate mother and her two children captured by the savages at the time and killed," she said.

"No, not killed, but ransomed later on after a horrible captivity,"

Interjected the lady.

"Is that true?" asked Bertha, all excitement.

Where, in Heaven's name, is the poor woman? She left a young child, a beautiful little girl, I am told, who was adopted by my husband's aunt, Mrs. Forster, and is now the loveliest little girl, from all accounts, at Centipede Canyon, where Mr. De Kalb lives!"

A deathlike paleness overspread the features of the stranger, and she clutched Bertha's chair, to keep from falling.

"Oh! my God!

"Oh, let me go to her at once! My child! My child!"

Mrs. Poinsett, sad-faced, entered the room at this moment. She had just given orders for a decent interment of her husband's murderer.

She saw at once something unusual had occurred, and with the presence of mind high breeding always

assures, placed a chair for the almost fainting, hysterical strange lady, and assisted her to it.

And meanwhile the latter sobbed, and wept tears of unspeakable joy, and breathed prayers of heartfelt thanksgiving to

"Him who doeth all things well."

Bertha, whose tears also would come, told her mother of the singular and happy revelation. And Mrs. Poinsett, with her own heart "bowed down by weight of woe," threw her arms around the stranger, and invited her to join them in their journey to Centipede Canyon, and reclaim her baby. "We start for there to-morrow, come," she added.

"It will be like tearing out her heart strings for Mrs. Forster to part with her," she said.

"But the dear child is yours!"

And, her countenance beaming with affection, Mrs. Poinsett went over, and kissed Bertha three times.

Bertha, an hour later, considerably excited, told Dinah what had occurred, and all that devoted servant could do and say was to raise her hands in amazement, roll her eyes skyward and exclaim:

"Oh, de bressed Lor'! De bressed good Lor'!"

The thoroughly happy mother, speaking of her experiences while a captive, said,

"Among the squaws I was left with, on the edge of the prairie, just outside the sand hills the day I was captured, was the wife of one of the head-chiefs who understood "greaser Spanish," and while the warriors were away, watching the train, I told her about the large herds of horses owned by my husband and father, and offered her a handsome present, for herself, of many yards of scarlet strouding, many trinkets and strings of pretty beads, if she would induce my captors to take me where my ransom could be purchased.

"The squaw consented, and to her intervention I owe my life.

"I thought they would surely kill me when some soldiers were passing, close by, who did not see us,

and I could hardly resist screaming to them, in spite of myself.

"By the aid of friendly Indians my father was communicated with, and a heavy ransom for us captives was demanded, coupled with threats of horrible torture and death if the terms of the savages were declined.

"After several months of frightful hardships we started on a long and tedious journey, to the *Llano Estacado* of Texas, and were surrendered to our anxious relatives on payment of the price.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE GARRISON FEBRUARY 22D; GALLANT PHIL. SHERIDAN THERE.

IT was a beautiful morning, Feb. 22d, when the Garrison at Fort Blank paraded for inspection.

The sun, shining on the rich uniforms of the officers and soldiers, lent brilliancy to the occasion.

There were white troops and colored troops there, and probably no better stud of horses was ever marshalled at any frontier garrison.

Gallant little Phil. Sheridan, the idol of the Army, and commander-in-chief, was the especial object of respect. He was to review them.

Deep down in the hearts of all these men was the greatest regard, esteem and love for that distinguished chieftain.

Therefore, in preparing for muster they had polished their buttons with exceptional care, had put an extra finish on their boots, and had brushed their uniforms with scrupulous neatness, and their white gloves, and glistening carbines and sabres were without blemish.

Probably no troops of the regular army, serving on the western plains, had ever, at any time, rendered more efficient and successful service than had those stationed at that post that day.

And there was another event that lent *eclat* to the occasion. And that was the presence of the paymaster.

In those days the army was paid bi-monthly and the advent of the "fully armed" dispenser of Uncle Sam's gold and silver certificates was always the signal for a rousing good time.

Because pocket-books then became plethoric, and no one cared for expenses.

The "Officer of the Day" and the "Officer of the Guard," the "Sergeant of the Guard," and even the Corporals of Reliefs, and sentries, look with leniency upon soldiers who, on that day, toy too much with Gambranius and Bacchus.

Yet, on this day, this memorable day, there was an utter absence of the usual excesses.

Of course the united presence of the General-in-chief and the paymaster meant an added delight to such an extraordinary event.

And great efforts were put forth to celebrate it.

Fort Blank was considered one of the handsomest of all garrisons on the remote Plains.

The house of the commanding officer was a large two-story building, the only one of masonry within six hundred miles, in any direction. It had cost a small fortune to build it.

The quarters of the other officers were one story double stone cottages, with deep broad verandahs in front and rear, and beautiful lawns in front and at the sides.

The club-room, at the post trader's, had a single, old fashioned, elegant billiard table, and it had cost twice its original price to transport it to that then very far away region.

The room was about forty feet by thirty, and sup-

plied with five round tables with cards, dominoes and dice, and was handsomely carpeted.

When not used for billiards the billiard table was given up to pin-pool, a fascinating pastime, now out of date.

It is quite likely that there never was congregated together in so small a community, and amid such barbarous surroundings, more culture, beauty, refinement, and well-dressed people than were represented in that little gathering of ladies, children and Army officers at that post.

The Commander's house, as stated, was two stories high and a broad hall ten feet wide ran through the centre from front to rear.

On either side it was flanked by three spacious, high-ceiled rooms, each of which opened out into smaller rooms forming an ell on each side.

Broad verandahs surrounded the house, and about seventy-five yards away floated the garrison flag from its tall staff, in the middle of the parade ground. And every afternoon at five o'clock, which was the dinner hour for the officers and their families, the regimental band assembled on a stand there and discoursed melodious instrumental rhythms.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ARISTOCRACY OF THE PLAINS.

On the morning of the day Moultrie and his party were guests at this garrison, first call for inspection and review had sounded, and under their respective first sergeants the several companies were undergoing a preliminary inspection.

Here and there officers, in twos and threes, were on their way across the parade ground to join their several commands.

It was an animating scene and one which, once witnessed by those unfamiliar with the same, would be sure not soon to be forgotten.

The parade ground was covered with a closely mowed, thoroughly cleaned carpet of *mesquit* or "buffalo" grass, curly, thick, and of the richest hue of green. A variety of verdure not grown east of the Mississippi valley.

No lawn in civilization could surpass it for beauty, and it was over this carpet, arrayed in their rich uniforms and wearing the glittering implements of war, that these bronzed participants in more than one arduous Indian campaign, strolled leisurely toward their men.

Before they reached them the first sergeants had called the roll and formed their companies.

Second call sounded. The band proceeded to its appointed place, and to the stirring notes of an enlivening air the troops marched to their respective posts and formed in line of battle, on the parade ground.

Then began the impressive formalities of a grand review by "Little Phil" Sheridan, the idol of the cavalry arm of the service.

It was a lovely day, and the piazzas of the officer's quarters were thronged with the ladies of the garrison and their citizen guests from the two adjacent small frontier settlements.

"The march off" of the different commands after the parade was dismissed, was voted especially spectacular.

The different companies, some in line and some in column, crossed and re-crossed each other in returning to their barracks, presenting, in their evolutions, an endless variety of beautiful colors and symmetrical, constantly varying forms.

The officers were near the flagstaff grouped around their distinguished Commander engaged in lively conversation.

In the large storehouse of the quartermaster's

department were piles of flags and bunting, and stacks of muskets and sabres, all highly polished, and as soon as the companies "broke ranks," squads from each hurried thither, and under the supervision of a committee of officers, began the work of decorating, for there was to be a grand military ball that evening to which everyone of any consequence within fifty miles around—and several of no consequence—were invited.

There were great pyramid-shaped chandeliers, made of inverted bayonets and mounting a hundred candles each, already suspended, at intervals, down the center of the vast room, and it was wonderful, and a grand tribute to the value of discipline, the promptness with which the walls were now being draped with the national colors, and festooned directly and diagonally across, from side to side, with gracefully arranged interlacings of red, white and blue bunting, by the recently arrived squads from the several companies.

In each corner, under prettily constructed canopies, were muskets in stacks, producing a pretty effect, and the monotony of the walls was relieved, every now and then, by crossed sabres, and pictures of the battlefield that had made the chief guest of the occasion famous—Winchester.

The hop was a pronounced success, and a novelty indeed, in every particular to Bertha. Even the dances were all of the old-fashioned, out-of-style sort in civilization. But that did not matter. It was the genuineness of the cordiality prevailing that entranced her.

And now she found out, too, what Moultrie meant when in response to her curious questioning he had said playfully that "perhaps he had learned all the charming elegancies of his recent social intercourse, she so much liked, from 'the aristocracy of the plains.'" He was too modest to arrogate that they were innate with him, and merely needed the provocation to draw them out.

Military formality charmed her. And she quickly discerned that the ceremonial courtesies of army officers, officially, became in social commerce second nature to them.

Was inevitable in fact, if bravery and tenderness were inborn.

In the several changes of station of troops after the recent Indian war, it fell to Hercules to be assigned to this remote garrison. And Bertha was ever so glad to meet him and have a good, long, reminiscent talk. But strange to say, Mrs. Hercules and she disliked each other at first sight.

And both Moultrie and Hercules to their chagrin saw it.

On the following morning, after a late breakfast, Moultrie drove out of the garrison, at a brisk gait, taking the road the wagon train had started out on at daybreak. He was puzzled and hurt over the aversion of Mrs. Hercules and his wife for each other, but did not refer to it.

It was not in his blood to be a cotquean. He could never have filled the bill as a reporter for a sorosis. So all he could do was to wonder and ponder and sigh over the matter.

In a garrison, as everywhere else, people gossip and handle each other's names, covertly and overtly, without gloves, and utter outrageous things about each other.

Military people, in this particular, are neither a whit better nor a whit worse than all the rest of the multitudinous human herd.

And the good people of this gay little garrison thought it very strange, indeed, that Hercules did not escort Moultrie at least a mile or two up the road, and made their comments to fit.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MAGNIFICENT SCENERY—MIDNIGHT WOLF BATTLE—TERRIBLE PRAIRIE FIRE.

AFTER a tedious, dusty uneventful drive of twenty miles, the next day after the hop, the long lumbering wagon train, at about three P. M. went into camp, on a most picturesque spot, on the bank of a deep and narrow river. The ground sloped downward in every direction.

In a long, gently undulating valley to the westward, nestled a beautiful little lake that looked like a huge silvery mirror, resting on a broad lap of green plush.

A small, shady grove, at the upper end of the valley, looked very inviting, for, though a delightful breeze was blowing, the sun's rays were uncomfortably warm.

Cacti, of all varieties, Spanish bayonets, sensitive plants and myriads of wild flowers dotted the plain everywhere.

Water fowl, in great flocks, floated hither and thither on the bosom of the lake or hovered and circled overhead, uttering their various cries, and numerous wild animals browsed on the succulent grass, carpeting its banks or rested on it, lazily. Ignorance of or indifference to impending danger seemed to pervade them all.

"The Garden of Eden!" exclaimed Mrs. Poinsett ecstatically; looking, from her carriage, on the charming scene.

"Rather say the Garden of the Gods," replied Moultrie, pleased at her pleasure, "with the animal kingdom thrown in."

"Get up and come out of there, you lazy little thing!" she continued, ignoring Moultrie and ad-

dressing Bertha, who was reclining, in a very comfortable position, inside, reading a novel, and sheltered from the sun by the awnings on either side, and with all the curtains rolled up, so that the breeze prevailing could be enjoyed to its fullest.

"Will Senora scan the beautiful valley through my glasses?" said Ysleta, lifting his hat and handing her his binocular.

And Bertha adjusted the focus and cried "Oh-h-h!"

Then mother and daughter united in enthusiastic expressions of delight.

Not a feature of the charming landscape and its inhabitants escaped them, and if such a thing threatened, at any moment because of lagging interest, Moultrie recalled their attention by pointing out some, as yet, undiscovered object of interest.

Meanwhile the camera was unpacked and a number of different desirable negatives were secured.

"Those large white birds sailing around so gracefully and indolently out there, in the middle of the lake, are swans, Trumpeter Swans," said Ysleta. "Shall I get you some?" This to Bertha.

"Yes, please. You are awfully kind."

"To-night, Senora. I will capture some to-night."

"Is it the Garden of Eden or the Garden of the Gods, little one?" asked Moultrie, addressing his wife.

"Before you answer look again through the glasses at those mountains, stretching off beyond. Just three days after we enter that range, with good luck, we will, at noon, be at Centipede Canyon.

"It will take us three days from here to reach the foot hills."

"What a grand view!" cried Bertha. "Here, mamma, look!"

"I should call it the Garden of the Gods," she said. And she handed Ysleta's powerful field lenses to her mother.

That night the Mexican with a selected party of

fifteen, secured several swans and a goodly cargo of ducks, geese and other smaller but toothsome water-fowl. And it was very fortunate for all in that train that he had made Bertha that promise.

About three A. M. they started on their return for camp, their horses heavily laden with the large catch of feathered game they had secured.

"Thar must 'a' bin a fierce b'ar fight ahead," said a short, stout, weather-beaten, veteran bull-whacker, who had been teaming on the Plains since the days of Brigham Young, after they had gone about a mile on their way.

"Just listen to them pesky coyotes! They're a barkin' wusser 'an I ever heerd. Reckon both b'ars got knocked out, an' they've come in at the finish.

"Jehosophat! Did you hear that now, Mr. Mexican? Sounds like some one calling for help!

"Thar, thar it is agin! Golly!"

Ysleta had heard.

"Forward, señors!" he cried. "Load every barrel! Winchester and pistol, every barrel! And keep close together!"

In less than ten minutes the party were in the midst of an immense pack of ravenous, howling wolves, emboldened to stand their ground by reason of their mere multitude. Their ferocity and temerity astounded even Ysleta, who was an old hunter of wild animals.

Yet their cowardice as individuals saved these brave men from a terrible death.

The waning moon shone with sufficient light to make everything near by dimly distinguishable.

Those of the wolves foremost in the rush on Ysleta and his men, were quickly shot down before they could come close enough to fasten their hungry fangs in the flesh of their intended victims.

And these were immediately pounced upon and devoured without ceremony by the others of the seemingly countless pack behind them, much after

the fashion in vogue in Christian mercantile centers, among debtors and creditors when the former fail.

"Push on, señors!" shouted Ysleta, "and answer those shouts of distress we hear ahead!"

And fifteen pairs of hearty lungs lent fifteen stentorian voices all the bellows they had.

All through the recent Indian war, troops and savages had alternately camped on the shores of this lake.

As a consequence, piles of brushwood that had been collected for fuel, and could be easily converted into fagots, abounded everywhere.

It really seemed providential at this moment.

The wolves, maddened by the increasing smell of fresh blood spilled, had grown frantic.

Ysleta, keen and quick in all things appertaining to prairie life, and schooled in a knowledge of these fierce yet cowardly animals, saw it.

"Gather this brushwood, make brands of some, and load yourselves with as much more as you are able to carry, and let me know as soon as you are equipped," he said.

Everyone obeyed with alacrity.

"Now reload your guns and light your fire brands! Are you ready?"

The lighted firebrands was the response.

"Then forward, and while you shoot with the right hand, with the left rush with the brand at every wolf in your way, and steer straight for the calls of distress. And do not forget to use your voices! Yell like fury! Because the sound of the human voice is terrifying to these ferocious beasts. I never knew them so bold before."

No people are more expert in the manufacture of torches out of dry branches than the frontiermen of the remote west. They bundle them together with great dexterity and celerity, and in a moment, seemingly, have a fagot ready that will flame for some considerable time.

Those prepared by Ysleta's party had been com-

pleted just in the nick of time, for, simultaneously with the lighting of them, a great rush was made by the maddened wolves, and both firebrands and revolvers were immediately called into lively and vigorous active service.

In fact, had it not been for the torches, every man of the party would have been torn literally into shreds, and devoured.

People in civilization who have seen a mad dog can form a faint conception of what one infuriated wolf looks and acts like. And all that such people have to do is to picture five hundred mad dogs rushing to devour them, if they would portray the scene here faintly described.

The flaming flambeaux lit up the scene weirdly, and gave hideous and grotesque shapes to everything around. The blazing eyes and frothing mouths and the howling and savage barking of the agile enemy, the rapid crack, crack, crack of firearms, and the imminent peril all were in, cannot be, with graphic fullness, adequately delineated.

But onward the little party went, sometimes actually running their fagots into the open jaws of intruding wolves in their pathway, until finally they reached those they had started out to rescue, and whose repeated cries for succor had guided them to the spot.

"Yes, after your first shot the infernal four-legged demons left us like a receding ocean wave, and then we discovered we had some ammunition left in our saddle pockets that under the excitement we had overlooked.

"Well, we got it out, loaded all around, and put what was left in our waist belts.

"But in proportion as you rfiring increased the wolves turned away from us.

"I cannot tell you how grateful we are for your opportune arrival. Fleshless bones, I fear, would have been the only monument to our presence here, if you had not come.

"We belong to a party of British army officers who came over to America for a buffalo hunt, and in a chase after antelope yesterday, got lost from our people. Lord Cavendish here was wounded by accident, a premature explosion of a cartridge, and we attempted a bivouac on this spot. The result you know. Again let me thank you for your gallant services."

The wolves, either panic-stricken at the fire-brands or satiated with the meal made off the carcases of their comrades that had been shot, had stampeded out of sight, and on Ysleta's courteous invitation the Englishmen accompanied his party back to camp, which they reached in a few minutes.

* * * * * *

A long, lurid streak lying low against the southern horizon, and a strong southerly breeze, attracted Ysleta's attention.

The camp was wrapped in deep slumber, not a soul being awake except the various sentinels on post, and the herders out among the grazing animals.

The Mexican enjoined silence and then listened with all his power. He pressed one ear to the earth and closed the other with the end of the rich scarf he habitually wore about his waist.

When he rose to his feet his face was blanched, and he bade the men unload their animals, and after tying them to the wagons as quickly as possible, wet their blankets and report to him at the tent of the lieutenant in command of the train military escort. He then hastened to that officer, roused him from his deep sleep, and in a few moments told him of the terrible danger that threatened.

By this time the whole southern horizon was a raging, dancing flame. And a deep, ominous roar was distinctly audible.

Bertha, Mrs. Poinsett and Moultrie slept on in

blissful oblivion of all that was passing and all that was threatening and so near at hand.

Very quickly the soldiers and trainmen were aroused and formed into a strong skirmish line some distance outside the train, armed with thoroughly wet blankets and gunny sacks, and the cattle and horses were driven inside the corral and tied securely.

Then Ysleta and the officer with blazing brands fired the prairie here and there beyond the line of men, and the dead grass, under the green blades so nutritious to the animals, at once sprang into fierce flames.

The skirmishers fought its spread inward, with perfect success, and soon a mad, leaping, hissing wall of fire was moving rapidly outward to battle with the oncoming terrific line approaching in swift billows from the south.

Wider and wider it spread and further away it receded, until it became indistinguishable from the other awful oncoming conflagration that was rushing so appallingly and rapidly nearer.

Then, between the two lines were discerned thousands of advancing forms of various sizes and shapes, and as they came nearer and nearer the receding arc of fire, they were seen to open out to the right and left as if bent on passing around it. Many in doing so fell, and were trampled to death by the others.

The near proximity of that lake, and the river, on the bank of which the wagon train was camped, proved a godsend to the survivors, for those advancing forms were—Buffalo, Elks, Antelope, Jack rabbits and wolves, all mixed up in a heterogeneous multitude, all terror-stricken and fleeing for life.

Once over the river, or in the cool waters of the shallow lake, and they were safe.

Standing on the top of a wagon, loaded high with boxes of merchandise, Ysleta, the young Lieutenant and the British gentlemen, through their powerful glasses, viewed the scene.

While doing so day broke and Moultrie joined them.

So quietly had the work in the camp, described, been done, that neither Bertha nor her mother had been awakened.

"In all my experience, Señor, I have never witnessed anything so terribly appalling yet grand as this," said Ysleta, addressing Moultrie. "It is a scene of a lifetime. Perhaps the Señoras would enjoy it."

"Certainly!" responded Moultrie, and he proceeded forthwith to awaken them.

To say that they were amazed, terrified, and awed at what they beheld, would but faintly express the impression made upon them.

There were thousands upon thousands of Buffaloes, in that motley and almost endless herd of prairie animals, that fled, in headlong and panic-stricken career, before those merciless billows of hotly pursuing flame that consumed everything in their path.

The wind was now blowing a perfect gale from the southwest, and the line of fire started at the camp had as a consequence spread rapidly toward the west but had made but little headway toward the east.

While scores upon scores of the fearfully suffering animals fell exhausted, and were burned alive, within sight of the river they were so vainly endeavoring to reach, and which proved the salvation of their more fortunate fellows, most of those that did escape eventually, bore around the east and short end of the fire line in their front, and having passed it took more room, scattered, and realizing they were out of danger, slackened their former mad gait, many of them coming down to a walk.

Some passed so close to the train that the very expression of their faces could be plainly read.

But others were still so terror-stricken and beside themselves with affright, that their staring eyes, and the almost human like agony depicted upon their countenances, made one think of what must have

been the appearance of those lost souls ferried over the rivers Styx and Acheron, by Charon, as they first beheld the horrors of Hades.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FATTY FINANCIALLY IN THE SWIM MARRIES MISS SWIMM.

THE rest of the journey to Centipede Canyon was uneventful, and even tedious, at times, to the ladies, after its first novelty wore off.

To be sure the idea of transporting water, for miles, in huge kegs, suspended under mammoth wagons, and the drinking out of canteens and flasks, directly from their mouths, and eating their meals from a folding table, spread under a canvas awning, and on grass, dotted profusely, everywhere, with beautiful wild flowers, was entirely new to them, as was also the crossing of streams by fords, instead of over bridges.

Sitting on camp stools, beside the camp-fire, during the evening, and listening to Señor Ysleta narrating various adventures, ripe with rare interest, and suggested by some occurrence of the day or evoked by some passing question—this experience, as well as the gathering of wild flowers and making fops of Moultrie and the Señor, by compelling them to wear button-hole bouquets, gave zest to her enjoyment and also afforded pleasing occupation for Bertha.

But, sleeping in a carriage, transformed into a cosy boudoir, on a stormy night, and securely protected from the howling blasts and madly beating rain, and seeing that carriage the next morning metamorphosed into a cosy breakfast room, for two, and then afterward changed back again, with quick

facility into its original shape, as an exceedingly comfortable vehicle—all this capped the climax, and somehow Bertha every now and then had to call Moultrie—when everyone else in the train was busy—out in the rain—getting ready to start, and had no time to look, and give him just one little squeeze, accompanied by the tiniest sort of a squeal and a long, clinging kiss.

Time brought promotion to Hercules. And, with his increased rank was multiplied the number of Juniors interested in him, and who would be benefited by the elimination of his name from the Army register.

There were Colonels' sons and nephews, and Generals' sons and nephews, and sons-in-law of Colonels and Generals, and nephews of Colonels' and Generals' wives, and husbands of Colonels' and Generals' nieces, all anxiously wishing, and waiting, and pulling their wires for promotion, as well as many others who were in no way related to Colonels or Generals.

And if history does not lie, and facts are not fiction, the odds were pretty generally in favor of the relatives aforesaid, when vacancies occurred that permitted promotions out of the fixed routine.

But, if any General or Colonel, with relatives in the line of routine advancement, saw fit to encourage steps looking to the creation of vacancies that would "boost" such relatives, it is highly probable that the "boosts" would result.

No man knew this better than Blondin.

And a more persistent and unscrupulous ally, when her own family was to be benefited, than petite Mrs. Gabbler, it would be hard for a man, of his motives and mettle, to find.

Hercules felt very little joy over his promotion.

His wife had grown quite shy of ladies' society, seldom visited those of the garrison, for whom they both expressed high regard, and was frequently surprised by him in mysterious, confidential converse

with Mrs. Gabbler, the disturbing of which seemed to annoy her very much.

"What conspiracies are you two hatching?" he would say, pleasantly enough.

And when her petite friend would go, Mrs. Hercules would accuse him of all manner of things, and drive him to despair, or the club-room.

Matters went on this way, going from bad to worse as time advanced, and Hercules protracted each of his increasing number of visits at that gaming and drinking resort.

His wife, first lukewarm, grew utterly indifferent and finally shunned him.

"No woman should be a wife," he said to her, one Sunday morning as he was dressing for inspection,

"Who does not feel honored by her husband's love."

"Well, then, you had better get a divorce!" she replied, acridly.

So he left the house, much excited, and feeling somewhat bullied.

If he had seen any evidences of suffering in her face, as the result of their growing estrangement, he would have felt that he was all and alone to blame.

"But no," he would say. "To quarrel is meat to her, and, like her otherwise excellent mother, she can't be happy unless she has some one to browbeat and cook."

Hercules, after this, was less at home, and more at the club, than ever. And at the latter place his forced exile from his own home and fireside, grown uninviting and frigid to him, and the constant sour visage of his wife, when not gossiping with Mrs. Gabbler and other visitors, made his moods more and more morose or cynically disputatious.

Had Mrs. Hercules amiably buried the hatchet and shown any of those nice little feminine attentions to his comfort, all might have been happily mended. But that she would not do. So Hercules

went on, ignored or belittled where he should have been wooed and cherished, championed and exalted. Went on, heart-sore, to his impending fate. Poor Hercules!

The sun shone brightly in his face as he, faithfully and with painstaking, drilled his troopers from day to day, but no ray lit up his aching heart. It was all cloudy and dismal there.

Meanwhile Blondin and the Gabblers were not idle nor without willing and secret allies, sowing the seed of discord and disaster that yielded their harvest later on.

The storm was brewing that was soon to break and overwhelm Hercules.

And the partner of his bosom, with blind fatuity, was helping it on.

* * * * *

Professor Cheval, as a shining light in the lower house of Congress, met many of his old pupils, who had seceded from the college secret societies, and now held positions of high trust. They had stoutly aided in suppressing hazing and establishing the college in its subsequent successful career.

It is needless to say that they became coadjutors in the advancement of more than one wise measure for the benefit of the people, and frequent reunions among them occurred.

It will be remembered that the lady, at the railroad terminus, whose baby girl at the time of her capture by the Indians had been adopted by Mrs. Forster, took passage for Centipede Canyon with Moultrie's party, on the invitation of Bertha.

It was like tearing her heart strings out for Mrs. Forster to part with the little darling, who had grown to be so winsome, beautiful and affectionate, and in deference to the feelings of the adopted mother the real mother tarried at the Canyon many months.

And fortune smiled on both, for Moultrie's

uncle and Mrs. Poinsett, no doubt influenced by the quickness with which desert places out in that far West sprang into cities, in a short time entered into an agreement whereby the uncle became Moultrie's father, according to good sound law, and Bertha became niece to her own mother.

And this marriage created a vacancy in the hotel management which was given, promptly, to the husband of the real mother of the baby aforesaid, which of course kept her foster mother and baby together.

Mention here of the connubial bliss of Fatty Forbush and Miss Swimm, should be made, and Fatty's tribulations and trials with the boisterous and defiant, self-willed little twins, with bullet-shaped heads —spherical bullets—that he walked the floor with, at that ghostly hour that divides two days, clad in a long, flowing, ample and befrilled night robe, and looking all the world like a spectral monk of medieval times and of high living and full habit.

After several years of most remarkable prosperity, in which time he had amassed a large fortune and had done much material good, here and there, for his fellow men, Moultrie had retired from active business. He had enriched Cedar-Crest College by a handsome endowment, when it was sadly in need of financial help, and in return that institution had conferred on him the degree of Master of Arts. For awhile he had managed a powerful lobby at Washington, in the interests of territorial development, but, as partisan politics, which was not to his liking, thrust itself to the front, he soon tired of this and removed to New York City where, with his beautiful wife and three sweet-faced children, he became a permanent resident.

Under his example and guidance, Fatty also struck the key-note of success and developed into a sterling, highly-respected and successful business man.

At the time he offered Miss Swimm his heart and

hand, he had several irons, all at a white heat, in the fire. He owned a newspaper, ably edited and prosperous, and an abattoir, with numerous refrigerator cars, and shipped frozen meats and hides, as well as peltry, in large quantities, to eastern and northern markets.

He also conducted a joint store and hotel, and was building an opera house, at Centipede Canyon, which had become a busy, bustling and important railway junction.

Last but not least, he was also the possessor of three profitable farms that were being worked, on shares, by enterprising and practical farmers.

But Fatty could never be happy without doing something out of the ordinary, so he tacked on his business letters and bill heads, "*Detur Digniori.*"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE FATE OF GABBLER AND BLONDIN, AND THE FORTUNE OF HERCULES.

HERCULES stood over the grave of his mother. He was alone in that quiet city of the dead. The dark lines under his sunken eyes, the drawn corners of his mouth and the look of woe in his face, portrayed his silent suffering.

Putting his hand on the headstone and looking sorrowfully down on the neglected sod, his lips moved.

"Thank God!" he said, "you did not live to know. But if health is vouchsafed me I will live and work and win. I will live to atone and punish."

Then he turned and walked sadly down the road and through the gate, out into the living world,

On the way he met two funerals, and as each passed he halted and lifted his hat. He did not know that in both of those solemn corteges, in carriages with half-drawn curtains, were those who knew and had recognized him. He had not seen them.

Blondin had at last triumphed, and Hercules had been dismissed from the army. His enemies had been mean and despicable, but no one of them had been big enough to be a villain and give him a chance at him.

By contemptible, underhand machinations, his seeming ruin had been wrought, but it proved the opposite. His supposed disaster proved an eventual godsend.

"Who is that distinguished looking young man? You seem to know him," said an elderly lady, in one of the carriages, to her white-haired husband.

"Well, I'm puzzled," was the response. "If I did not know he was out on the plains eating Indians and killing or capturing buffaloes and antelopes I'd believe it was young Hercules, son of my old law partner. You remember my old partner, secretary of legation at Blank, don't you?"

"Why, certainly! Didn't he and you graduate at Y—— at the same time, and then start a little grocery. How disgusted I was until you both became, as the Britishers put it, "briefless barristers."

"Ah! Thereby hangs a tale, my dear. I never told you, and I will be brief. I never like long tales, especially on horses, on muddy streets or during rainy weather. Old Hercules and I were of rich but respectable parentage. That is our dads were rich when, as blooming and immensely wise freshmen, we entered Y——. But their wealth had taken wings before we graduated. And we realized we were not as sapient then as when we were freshmen. Refreshing realization, wasn't it? But Lycurgus and Solon were our gods, and the law, we determined, should be our destiny. But, like the skillful general who maneuvered his matchless alignments over

broken topography, and had to encounter obstacles, we had to overcome difficulty, and that difficulty was lack of cash. "Money makes the mare go." So, with what little our daddies could rake and scrape together, we started and ran a grocery, to pay current expenses, and meanwhile buckled down to hard study; and there you are." Then, with a far-away, absent look, the old gentleman passed his horrid snuff box to his better half.

Hercules had never gambled, although he had often looked on, interestedly, during exciting games of poker, among his brother officers.

Three years before he had loaned one hundred dollars to one of them, who desired to raise the bet, and it had never been returned. He walked the three miles from the cemetery to his obscure lodgings and wrote a dignified but plainly worded letter, telling how he had pawned all his valuables, even to his overcoat, and plainly stated his financial distress. Then he took up the morning paper and read, carefully, the want advertisements. He had never read them before. And not a line of news did he read that day. He treated the evening paper and its "Extras," the same way. And, after dark, he went out to a little restaurant and bought a dinner for twenty cents. And this experience was only the vanguard of a long train that followed, each of which was a revelation. And all of which amplified his mind and fitted him for the responsible duties toward himself and his fellow men he was called on to discharge later on. How he did thank God then that he had been delivered from a lifetime bondage in the narrow rut of an isolated profession that would have warped his intelligence to a moiety of knowledge of his fellow-men, their pursuits, needs and predilections.

Nevertheless he felt most keenly what he considered to be his grievously unjust humiliation. He would not think of it as a disgrace, because he had neither committed nor been charged with a crime. And he

thought that his resignation should have been accepted, when he had tendered it.

But he very sensibly and determinedly dismissed his bitter retrospections, regrets and heartburnings, and resolutely essayed to at once and thoroughly explore all the avenues and alleys of throbbing life, denizened by his fellow mortals, and learn what he could of their pursuits and fancies, their drifts and ambitions.

Herculean task, of course, but one which seriously and properly undertaken and perseveringly pushed would yield profitable issue.

To feel their pulse, have friendly friction with them, and build up for himself an honorable congeniality among those *worth it*—that was his aim and purpose. And he succeeded beyond his brightest anticipations.

He was a born aristocrat, and had no mock modesty, no false pretension, no stage airs and tinsel in his makeup. But bravely meeting current needs he cheerfully undertook every task, however humble, that presented, and rapidly ripened his experience thereby.

His trials, and struggles, and disappointments, and petty reverses were many. But he never halted.

His few leisure hours, early or late, were given to his law study. To earn his daily bread he worked as a night watchman, with ignorant, coarse and egotistical companions, good hearted withal, whose highest ambition was to be known as the oldest of the night force employed by the corporation.

Also as a book agent, a newspaper reporter and afterward editor, a theatrical advance press agent, an instructor in military tactics and calisthenics, a sword master, a steamboat agent, a mercantile reporter and a hotel clerk.

In these occupations he earned the wherewithal with which to pay his living expenses and those attending his study of the law, which he pursued with unfaltering, untiring diligence.

And in these occupations he came in close touch with all manner of men. But nothing diverted him. Steadfastly through all he applied himself to his law tomes, at every opportunity.

* * * * * *

Several years later on a serious and formidable Indian war was waging. A score of tribes were on the warpath. White settlements, in some of the new territories, were driven back a hundred miles and "the westward march of the star of empire" had been greatly retarded. At last a truce and the suspension of hostilities was agreed on, and a peace commission, with full power to treat, and followed by an immense, "overland wagon train," laden "to the bows" with presents for the savages, was en route to the appointed rendezvous for a great and final "pow wow."

The late Major, now Colonel Blondin, was in command of the picturesque grand council camp, or to speak more accurately, he commanded the military contingent of the camp, and imagined he was vested with supreme authority and was the most important personage among those assembled there.

Meantime super-officious, petite Madame Gabbler, who had "sowed the winds," was now "reaping the whirlwinds."

And a large and robust harvest of whirlwinds, too, that ruthlessly swept hope from her selfish, plotting, scheming heart, and deluged her with painful misgivings.

Accidents and counter intrigue had checkmated her at last, and multifarious defeats and the defection of former mischief-brewing allies had been the potent factors evolving that result.

Her inner rottenness was at last laid bare, her hypocrisy made naked, and her best laid schemes all went aglee.

Her husband had finally reached the goal she had

so ardently and impatiently longed for, and so unscrupulously planned and devised and battled for.

The needed number of vacancies had at last occurred, and he was now, prospectively, a full-fledged "*el capitaine*," a troop commander-in-chief with *two* bars "on his right royal shoulder."

Mrs. G. was delighted beyond expression—words are inadequate. She grew gushy—very.

And, to her particular pets and confidants, she told how, *as soon as his appointment arrived*, she intended to "make it awful warm for *some* people."

But a tremendous freshet was prevailing. Resistless floods and torrents were swiftly sweeping everything away, making new rivers and river-beds, broad, impassable stretches of foam-caped lakes, and changing the topography of the country everywhere. Only hills that were rock-ribbed, withstood the awful tempest, the tornado and cyclone, and the never ceasing downpour of the deluge of rain, sleet and snow. Houses there were none. But trees "built on sand" disappeared forever, as did the sand-hills that had stood for ages, and on which the ancestors of those forest monarchs had been born. It was several hundred miles from Lieutenant G.'s garrison to the nearest railroad, and, even during a severe storm of a single day, dry creeks became impassable, swift-flowing, boiling, seething torrents. But now there was prevailing a combined tornado and freshet with bitter cold weather, of a fortnight. And all the brawny red men of the several tribes throughout that whole territory were hot on the war-path.

At last the storm abated, the floods receded and the mails were resumed. One morning Lieutenant G. died. The next his appointment as captain came.

But Mrs. G. could not sign and accept it *for him*. And how she had boasted when the vacancy had occurred.

"Now my husband will wear two bars!" She gave no thought to the desolate, weeping widow and

orphans of the dead captain whose death had caused the vacancy.

Not she.

When Hercules finally became partner at law with his father's old law partner, he wrote his wife an affectionate letter, pleading for her to "come back." But, if the letter was answered, not ignored, it was "*the* letter that never came."

Judge of Colonel Blondin's amazement, we may say chagrin, when, on the arrival of the Peace Commission at the garrison he commanded, and which was to treat with the Indians for a cessation of hostilities—judge of his unspeakable surprise when, on being referred for instructions to the Chairman of that Commission, he came face to face with his former victim, Hercules. How he *did* wilt! The bulldozing strut and swagger that had marked his approach to that official's headquarters did not appear when he retired therefrom. And the most galling part of the interview, to him, was the mock condescension of Hercules, and his pretended, palpably pretended, deference to the pompously delivered suggestions of the Colonel, towards whom he acted as though he had never before seen or heard of him.

How incensed the gallant Colonel was!

And how confounded and dumbfounded when, two years after a successful treaty of peace had been negotiated, he found his application for promotion had been held up, if not positively denied, because of the reasons set forth, cogently, in the protest of the Military Committee of the House of Representatives of Congress, of which Hercules was a member. That protest served to settle, for all time, any further advancement for him, and effectually destroyed his power to further persecute his subordinate.

THE END.

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